

Seeking the Summit by MonsterSquad

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Summary: Sequel to Zero-Mile Mark. El has been accepted into Mike's group of friends but still needs to have a talk with Mike about what they really are to each other. They still like camping and hiking even after being lost in the woods. They continue to dance around the urges they both have whenever they're near one another and can only go so long before the dam breaks.

1. Chapter 1

Second story in a collection I'm working on entitled Alone in the Woods. First one is Zero-Mile Mark. Thanks for all the terrific feedback on that one and a shoutout to FangirlingStrangerThings for letting me rant about elves.

It wasn't that Jane Hopper didn't like her name. It was okay. It was *fine*. What she liked more was her nickname for herself, and what she liked more than that was *his* nickname for her. Scratch that, she *loved* his nickname for her.

Since being lost in the woods with Mike Wheeler she hadn't been able to stop thinking about him, and not just because they spent so much time together in close proximity. He was her *friend* and she hadn't had one of those. Okay, she would admit to herself as she fell asleep at night that maybe he was a little more than just a *friend* but she couldn't find the harm in that, not when she fell asleep thinking about how his lips felt against hers or how he smiled at her like no one else existed. They hadn't talked about labels but she knew that there was more to their relationship than just being buddies.

And with his friendship had come a set of other friends. She had been awkward and shy at first but she was beginning to consider them to be her own friends now and not just accessories to Mike. They had accepted her at their lunch table and would speak to her in class, even without Mike present. She had never known that having just a few people legitimately care about her would boost her confidence so much.

The best part of her new group, besides Mike, was that it came with another girl. Max Mayfield was considered a member (*the Party*, as Dustin insisted it always be called) but she didn't often get a chance to eat lunch with them because of her schedule. El hadn't spent much time with her until one Saturday when she joined Mike and the boys at the arcade. She immediately liked Max, her sassiness and *take no shit* attitude was both refreshing and hilarious. At first upon hearing there was a girl in the group she had been apprehensive that Mike might like her more, but after seeing them interact El knew that their bond was in no way of the romantic nature. It helped that Mike

wouldn't let go of El's hand until he watched her play a video game, and then he stood behind her with his arms around her. It was both distracting and exhilarating for El. She didn't mind though. It was a good distraction.

"Damn, Wheeler, you're going to make her waste all of her quarters!" Max said with a huff as she glanced over at El playing a game while Mike was strapped to her back like a parachute. Max was busy playing Dig Dug while El was trying to play Star Wars, much to Mike's excitement.

"Right. Sorry, El." Mike stepped back and to the side a bit. El smiled apologetically at him before turning her attention back to the game. He watched her face as she concentrated, how her lower lip went between her teeth on one side and her eyebrows scrunched up. It was adorable.

"I'm at the Death Star!" El beamed.

"Shoot the guns!" Mike jumped up and down a little. "You're doing great!"

Use the force, Luke.

El didn't want to use her powers but it was tempting. She held back though, choosing to enjoy the moment for what it was, just kids playing games at the arcade. No powers necessary.

You're all clear kid!

El squeezed the trigger. The X-wing pulled back and she watched as the Death Star exploded. "I did it! I did it!" She turned to Mike who was grinning from ear to ear. She jumped into his arms. "That was fun!"

"Have you never been to the arcade before, El?" Lucas asked, having joined them when he heard the commotion.

"I never had a reason to go. I'm glad I do now. This is really fun." She smiled.

"We come every Saturday. Even if *Mike* is going to skip out on us next

week to go hiking again." Dustin was saying as he shoved another two quarters into Dragon's Lair.

"You're going hiking next weekend?" El asked Mike.

"It's just a day hike. I'm still trying to bulk up, you know? Did you want to come with me?" Mike thought he knew the answer to that question. He was surprised at what she said instead.

"I definitely would like to come with you. Is that cool?"

"Cool. Definitely. We can eat lunch on the trail if you want." Mike offered, his head still spinning that she'd want to go back into the forest with him.

They both smiled and looked at the floor. They had been standing side by side, watching over Dustin's shoulder as he tried to keep Dirk the Daring alive. It wasn't going well for Dirk. El felt Mike's hand brush against hers and she threaded her fingers into his. He squeezed and she felt her heart beat faster.

The group was eating lunch together at Benny's Burgers when Max suggested that she and El should have a sleepover some time. She had decided upon meeting her that she did indeed like El. She wanted to get to know her better but the boys, especially Mike, made that more difficult. They always had something to say and Mike was always monopolizing El's time. El didn't seem to mind that one bit but Max wanted to see who she was when Mike wasn't around.

"You should spend the night with me some time, El." Max said as she dipped a french fry in ketchup.

"When?" El asked, surprising Max at how agreeable she was to the idea.

"What are you doing tonight? Oh, wait. My house is no good tonight. Billy is there and my parents are going out. I hate being there with just him. I wouldn't do that to you."

"You could come over to *my* house. I'm sure Hop won't mind. Sometimes he has to go out at night anyway. It would be nice to not be alone." El said.

"Really? Awesome. We're going to get to know each other really well." Max smiled at El. El looked across the table at Mike, who gave her a knowing nod. He knew that Max wouldn't come away from the sleepover knowing *everything* about El. She gave him a tiny secret smile and felt his foot bump against hers under the table. She took a sip of soda and pretended to be absorbed in what Dustin was saying about how Dragon's Lair was rigged against him, all the while keeping her foot on Mike's and her eyes glued to his.

After lunch everyone went their separate ways for the day. Mike and El were walking slowly toward her house.

"Are you sure you want to come with me next weekend? I figured you'd had enough of the woods." Mike asked, taking her hand in his once again as they walked.

"I like being in the woods. I don't like being lost in them but we're not going to get lost again. We will stay on the trail. *I promise.*" Mike laughed at her statement.

"You are a quick learner, El Hopper."

"I like that you call me El. Thank you for that." She said quietly. "It makes me feel good."

Mike just smiled at her.

The girls had decided that Max would come over to El's house before dinnertime that night. She had never had a sleepover before and was a bit nervous, not really knowing what to do at one. Hopper sensed her wariness.

"It will be fine. You just watch movies and talk, mostly talk I think. You eat all my food and make me keep telling you to keep the noise down. Don't worry so much about it."

El didn't have a lot of time to consider if he was right or wrong because a short time later the doorbell rang and Max was there. El showed Max around the house, making a quick tour. They stopped at El's bedroom and Max dumped her bag onto the floor. She looked around the room and noticed a few framed pictures.

"Hey, is this from the *lost in the woods* trip?" She asked, picking up a picture of Mike and El in front of a tent.

"It is. So is this one." El pointed to the two of them in front of a waterfall. "That's kind of the reason we got lost in the first place."

"Huh. Well for being lost you both look happy. Like, *hi, we're on our honeymoon* happy." Max laughed as she set the picture back on the dresser.

Hopper had bought them pizza and El was surprised and pleased when he said that they could take theirs into her room to eat. He was trying to be a cool dad but he also wanted to watch television in peace for a while. They grabbed a couple of sodas and disappeared into El's room to eat.

"Your dad is pretty cool." Max said as she took a slice of cheese pizza from the box. They were sitting on the floor facing each other, the pizza between them, listening to *The Queen is Dead* by The Smiths. Max had already decided that *she* would pick the next album they listened to.

"This music is depressing." She said as she finished her slice.

"Mike likes it."

There it was. Max rolled her eyes. "So tell me about your little woodland adventure with him. Spare no details."

El looked thoughtful for a moment. She didn't really want to tell everything that happened, and she wouldn't possibly tell *everything*, but it did seem like it would be nice to have another girl to talk to about things that she was feeling or some of the things that happened. She was kind of bursting to tell someone.

"We got lost because of me. I wanted to look at a waterfall. We couldn't find our way back so we had to camp. I fell and hurt my ankle so we were stuck for a couple of days, not that we could have gone anywhere anyway because of a massive storm."

"So you were literally stuck inside a small tent for days with Mike? Wow. How did that go?"

"It was nice. I'm afraid of storms so he tried to make me feel better."

"I bet he did." Max laughed.

"It wasn't like that. He wasn't trying to take advantage of me. He kept me warm and made me not worry as much."

"How did he do that?" The smirk on her face was making El a little annoyed.

"It was really cold, Max. We had to do what we could to stay warm. We zipped the bags together so our body heat could combine."

Max was laughing outright now.

"Why are you laughing so much?"

"Because I know you don't mean it like that but literally everything you are saying could be code for *we had sex*. Like *he tried to make me feel better (we had sex)*, *he kept me warm (we had sex)*, *so our body heat could combine (we totally had sex)*. It's just funny!"

"But we didn't have sex. You know that, right?" El was visibly worried.

"Come on, El. I know that. I'm just giving you a hard time. You should see how your face changes when you talk about him. It's obvious. You may not have done it yet, but I know you totally want to." Max's tone got softer and didn't sound so teasing. It didn't make El blush any less.

"We did kiss. A lot." Her eyes looked dreamy as she told Max how that came about. Mostly leaving in all of the details.

"And? Is he a good kisser?" Max asked, clearly interested in why El's face would soften and almost glow so much when she talked about Mike.

"I don't have anyone to compare him to, he was my first kiss. But if I could only do one thing for the rest of my life, I'd want it to be kissing him. Forever."

"Damn, El. Does he know you feel that way? Have you two talked about everything?"

"No. I mean, we keep holding hands and he kisses me sometimes and he hugs me but we haven't talked about *feelings* or anything like that."

"You should just tell him how you feel. Believe me, he feels the same way. I didn't get to see for myself but Lucas filled me in on that day in the cafeteria after you came back to school. When Mike kissed you in front of everyone. We're talking *Mike Wheeler* here. He doesn't call attention to himself. That definitely meant something."

El thought about it. She had been caught off guard by his actions in the cafeteria that day, wanting to believe they would still be friends but not letting herself believe it totally until she saw him there. When he touched her face she knew her life at school was about to change for the better. And the kiss made her weak in her knees. She still thought about it often.

"Earth to El!" Max was waving her hand in front of El's face.

"Sorry, I zoned out. I was lost in thought."

"Clearly. Even when he's not here, Wheeler is always running his mouth."

El turned red, hid her face in her hands, and the two girls rolled onto the floor laughing.

It was a fun sleepover. They stayed up late talking about everything. Max learned about all the foster families El had grown up with, which made her fights with Billy seem a little less dramatic. She found out that El had already taken the SAT and had scored an 800 in math and an 800 in verbal, *as a junior*.

"Does Mike know about that? I bet you're smarter than he is."

"It hasn't come up. I don't like to talk about it a lot."

"Okay, but that's something to be proud of. Quiet little El rocking the SAT and never mentioning it. That's totally you." El threw a pillow at her.

They finally were feeling tired enough to try to go to sleep. As they lay there in the dark, Max spoke up.

"So you're going back into the woods with Mike next weekend? Do you really just want to go hiking with him?"

El was silent. Max heard her sigh. "I just like being around him. I don't care what we do. I do like hiking and the woods though. I like to take pictures. And it's just for the day, we won't be spending the night."

"Aww, I know that's disappointing." Max was laughing again.

"Shut up." El said, good-naturedly. "I like how he makes me feel. He's just really special."

"Sweet dreams then, El." Max told her, her smile evident even though El couldn't see her face.

El was excited all week leading up to her next trip with Mike. Sure, it would only be a day but they'd also have the car ride to the trail and the car ride home. She was looking forward to spending time with him. She wanted to discuss their feelings but she was so afraid of ruining what they currently had going. If she told him how she felt, would he really feel the same way? What if it changed their friendship? It had taken so long to finally have a friend and now she couldn't bear the thought of messing that up.

That Friday Mike had invited her over to his house to watch movies in the basement. He had her bring her backpack so they could make sure they had what they'd need the next day. They weren't planning on becoming lost but Mike would always make sure he had everything necessary in case such a situation arose once again. Satisfied with their supplies and having agreed that he would pick her up at 7:00 the next morning, they turned their attention to the movie. He had let El decide and she had chosen *Stand By Me*. He nestled himself onto the sofa next to her. She smiled when he put his arm around her.

By the end of the movie El had silent tears streaming down her face. Mike noticed and wiped them away gently with his thumbs, holding

her face in his hands after he did so. He found himself lost in her eyes, still sparkling from the tears she had shed.

"It's just a movie. What's wrong, El?" Mike asked, his voice so soft only she could hear him. His fingers were in her hair now.

"I know. It just makes me think about my life and how I didn't even have friends when I was twelve. When I really think about it, I know I'm not like everyone else. It makes me sad."

"You aren't like everyone else, El. You are better. Lots of people exist in the world, not many change the lives of other people. But you do. You changed my life. My life is better now and it's only because of you."

He had moved his hands from her hair and face and now they were both resting on her knees, the two of them facing each other on the sofa. El felt him gently slide his fingers up her thighs, stopping just before he reached her hips. She wanted to pull him into her but she held back, wanting to see what he was going to do next. She felt him squeeze the tops of her thighs ever so gently. She felt her body get warmer and couldn't keep herself from shifting closer to him. Without thinking her hands moved to his shoulders. His hands moving to her waist to pull her into him, their faces almost touching. She liked being so close to him, being able to feel his cheek with her nose, being able to feel his breath on her skin. It felt almost more intimate than kissing. Almost. She tilted her head as he moved his and their lips brushed together. She felt the slightest push, his hands sliding up her back as he laid her down on the sofa.

He's on top of me and I don't ever want him to move. She thought to herself, still kissing Mike, wrapping her arms around his neck to pull him closer to her. His weight on top of her felt perfect, like safety and home and she didn't want it to ever be lifted. He deepened the kiss, she could feel his tongue stroking hers, teasing by alternating between her lower lip and the tip of her tongue. She smiled into his kiss and she could feel him smile back. He moved to her neck and she tensed up, not expecting to feel his tongue on the skin there. It felt like nothing she could describe save for that she wanted more of it. She wanted more of everything but in the back of her mind she knew they needed to talk first. Tonight though, they could just continue

what they were doing. She didn't want to talk tonight. She only wanted to feel, to feel Mike's mouth on hers, to feel his hands on her body (which caused her to imagine what it would be like to feel his hands when she was wearing fewer layers, when she was wearing nothing maybe), to feel his warm breath on her skin. She was happy to do that. Maybe they would talk tomorrow. There weren't a lot of distractions on the trail. For now she was quite content to be right here, underneath him on his basement sofa, letting him kiss her and kissing him back, feeling like she never wanted it to end. He slipped his hand under her shirt and she jumped, surprised at the move.

"No?" He asked, clearly sorry.

"Just surprised. Not *no*." She smiled and moved his hand back. He grinned and then his smile changed again back to concentration, to wonder as he felt her soft skin. His hand moved to the clasp of her bra and he felt it give, the tension on the straps immediately breaking and causing them to slide off her shoulders. Her soft gasps as his fingers gingerly touched her near her bra made his heart race. He ran his hand back around to the front and tugged gently, pulling her bra away from her breasts. He had been kissing her neck and collarbone area while he performed the removal. She finally felt the fabric slide away and his hand move around to cup her breast. She almost cried out, having never felt anyone else touch her there, and certainly never when she was in such a state of arousal.

Mike was also feeling blissful. He was currently lying on top of the most amazing girl in the world and she was letting him touch her chest. Her skin was so soft and her breasts fit perfectly in his hand and he thought everything about her was just *perfect*. He never wanted it to end.

They were getting hotter, the two of them, both at first satisfied with their activities but then both needing more, needing to be closer, to feel more. They didn't hear Karen Wheeler open the basement door but luckily she only called down to them instead of actually making the trip down the stairs.

"El, your dad is here! Early day tomorrow so you two need to get some sleep!" They jumped apart and then heard the door close once again.

They laughed nervously, both realizing that they were indeed about to get carried away to a point from which there would be no return. And in Mike's basement. With his parents upstairs. She quickly grabbed her bra off the floor and shoved it in her purse. With her jacket on Hop would never notice. She left her backpack because Mike would bring it in the morning.

"I'll see you in the morning." She was about to head up the stairs and he had followed her. She turned back around when he spoke and he pulled her close enough to kiss her goodnight. It left her hazy and her mind was foggy.

"Yeah," she managed. She stumbled up the stairs, a silly grin on her face.

A/N: So this is a sequel to Zero-Mile Mark. There will be hiking and camping but the titles are metaphorical. When I say summit in this one I'm not talking about the top of a mountain (wink, wink, nudge, nudge, say no more!). I hope it will be enjoyable and hopefully longer than the last one. Thanks for reading! I'll try to have the next chapter soon.

2. Chapter 2

Saturday morning turned out to be beautiful. The air was crisp as Mike rang the bell at the Hopper residence. Someone down the street was already burning a pile of leaves and the air just smelled of autumn. El answered the door wearing jeans and a burnt orange sweater.

"Ready to go?" Mike asked, trying hard to stay in the moment and not stare at her.

"Yes. Just let me get my camera. Come in for a minute?"

Mike entered the house and stood in the front hallway, waiting for her to return from her bedroom with her camera. It didn't take her long.

"I'm ready now. Shall we go?"

Mike had his father's car for the day and they set off for the trail. It was about an hour away, a nice place for a day hike but people often camped there as well in the summertime. The trail passed by a lake that was a pretty popular swimming hangout in the warmer months.

On the car ride there, El felt nervous. She knew she wanted to talk to Mike about what they were to each other but every time she started to bring it up she got scared and changed the subject. He could tell something was bothering her but since he was driving and couldn't really look at her for long periods of time he thought he'd wait until they were hiking to talk to her about it.

Even though she was nervous, the drive was in no way unpleasant. They sang along to the radio, her laughing as Mike tried to hit notes that weren't really in his range. Mike stopped singing altogether a couple of times to just listen to her, how her emotions came through with just simple notes. She would catch him looking at her and then quickly pull his eyes back to the road when she turned her head to look back at him. She thought it was cute and it also made her feel better about what she was going to ask him a little later in the day.

The times they were silent weren't uncomfortable either. El just watched the trees pass by as they got closer to their destination. She felt at ease, not needing to fill the silence with unnecessary conversation. When they did arrive Mike helped her with her pack, making sure the straps were tight enough, but not too tight. He draped her camera over her head so it hung from her neck and then he shouldered his own pack.

They started hiking. Mike planned to stop in a couple of hours for lunch. He had packed a picnic but didn't tell El about it. He was hoping to find a nice spot to stop and then surprise her with it. El walked a couple of paces behind him.

After a little while, El's courage was built up enough. *Just ask him.*

She was just about to start speaking but Mike started instead.

"My parents don't sleep together anymore. I mean, literally don't sleep in the same room. I used to think it was because my dad would fall asleep in his chair but now I think they just don't want to sleep together. They were never really the type to say *I love you* a lot, you know? Like, my mom is all about demonstration. She'd cook these big meals that she knew he liked, or that *we* liked, and she would make sure to have his favorite foods in the fridge or pantry. She always tried to do what she thought he wanted. I think she could only do that for so long without getting what she needed in return. I don't really want to go into what I think she needed, that's weird to think about, but I know my dad doesn't even talk to her much so other aspects of their relationship must be pretty dry as well. I don't know why I just told you that. I'm sorry."

"You don't have to be sorry, Mike. I'm always here to listen to you. If you need to talk about something, about *anything*, I'm here."

Mike had turned around to look at her and she smiled, her eyes so sincere.

"Thanks, El. Anyway, it just made me think about words and how people just throw them around, like if they say them then they don't have to do anything else. There's no proof other than the utterance of them. That seems lazy and unfair. I'd rather be shown how someone

feels about me than just hear a string of words. My mom can tell me she loves me but if she never feeds me or hugs me or listens to me or does things just because she thinks I'll like them then what good are the words? Just an example. I'm not all into my mom or anything." He laughed, causing her to giggle as well. "I'm not saying words are bad, just words without actions are kind of, well, just words."

"I agree. I totally agree."

"And I think they *did* love each other at some time, or at least, they tried to. I don't think either of them ever experienced the kind of love everyone always hopes for because they read about it in book or see it on television. Fictitious love, you know? But I think it does exist. I think it's just about finding the right person and not settling for something or someone that doesn't make you glad to wake up every day. Someone who makes your life better. I think my parents were just being convenient. Marriage shouldn't be a business deal. Now I'm rambling." He shook his head and laughed quietly at himself.

"I think you're right." El thought about the soap operas she was so fond of watching. She liked the idea of their passionate love but the people on the shows were always jumping around from person to person, claiming the same undying love to each of them. She wanted the passionate part but she wanted it to be with one person forever. Why did it have to be so hard to fall in love and mean it? The people on television couldn't seem to do it for long. She knew how she felt about Mike and she couldn't imagine not feeling that way. She could imagine feeling it even more deeply and the idea excited her.

"I'm glad you came with me today, El." Mike smiled, having stopped again to look back at her.

She smiled. "No other place I'd rather be."

They walked along. El thought the trail Mike had picked was indeed very pretty. She stopped them to take their picture on a few occasions. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and everything seemed dry, a definite difference from their previous outing into the woods. She was very cognizant of staying on the path at all times. They came to a bend in the trail that overlooked the lake. Next to the main trail, about thirty feet from the path, was a little alcove of trees that

formed a sort of semi-circle. Mike walked into it.

"You're going off the trail!" El complained.

"I can still see the trail. I'm only going to right here. See? The trail is still right there. Come look."

El walked down into the little grove of trees with Mike. He had been right, she could see the trail. The area seemed secluded still though and she thought it was a nice place.

"This is a great spot. Are you hungry?" Mike asked. He had already taken off his pack and was digging in the top of it, looking for something.

"Yes. I didn't have breakfast."

Mike took a blanket out of his pack and went about spreading it out on the ground. Then he took a couple of plastic containers out.

"I brought turkey sandwiches with lettuce and tomato, some strawberries, and Eggos. I hope that's okay with you." He set the containers on the blanket and took the lids off. "Oh, and this water bottle has lemonade in it. I thought we could share."

El was touched. He had mentioned having lunch on the trail but she hadn't expected a picnic. She had never had a picnic before with another real person. There were a few times when she was little that she pretended with a stuffed bear but she never had real food and she *never* had someone make food for her and bring it unbeknownst to her.

"You brought a picnic? For me?"

"Well, um, sure, I thought you'd like it." He had been sitting on the blanket on his knees, unpacking the food while El still stood looking down at what had just become a picnic that she had not expected. She knelt down on her knees in front of him as he was still taking the lid off the strawberries. He looked up and she kissed him softly on the lips.

"Thank you, Mike."

They sat on the blanket and ate the sandwiches he'd made and each had an Eggo. Since Mike was sitting with his legs stretched out in front of him El laid her head on his thigh while they lazily ate strawberries.

"In the car earlier, you seemed distracted. What was that about?" Miked asked. He had started to run his fingers through her hair softly.

"I was just thinking."

"What were you thinking about?"

El didn't want to embarrass herself. She had been thinking about a lot of things really. Mike's fingers in her hair were making her feel uninhibited and she started to say everything that was on her mind.

"I was thinking about the last time we were in the woods. Do you ever think about it?" She asked, lying on her back so that she could see his face.

"All the time actually." Mike admitted.

"What specifically do you think about?"

Mike thought for a moment. He sighed. "I will definitely embarrass myself if I tell you." He chuckled.

"No you won't. I won't make fun of you."

"Okay. If you promise."

"Obviously I promise."

"I think about our first kiss and giving you a foot massage. That's what I think about most. I mean, I remember it all but if I had to choose memories to put in a time capsule, those are the ones."

El smiled. Those were definitely some high quality memories. "Yeah, those are good ones. Very good ones. Do you mean you think about that more than me being all weird and using my "powers" and stuff?"

"You are definitely truly special in that regard, you're not weird, but yes, I mean I think about kissing you and the other things that didn't use your powers more than anything." Mike took a strawberry from the container and moved it to El's lips. Her eyes never left his as she took a bite. He watched her eat it and then he used his finger to wipe some strawberry juice from her lip. She licked his finger seductively and he thought he was going to lose his mind. She sat up as he was bending forward, meeting his lips with hers. She tasted like strawberries.

"I wish I could be with you all the time." Mike said between kisses, whispering, like it was only for *her* to hear, not even allowing the trees to be privy.

"Really?" El stopped and looked at him. Her hands stayed where they had been, gripping his soft hair in both of her fists loosely.

"I dream about you, I think about you all of the time. I don't want you to leave when you have to go home." Mike was looking into her eyes again, his pupils huge. His hands felt warm and safe in her hair.

"I feel that way too. Constantly."

Then they were kissing again. Mike's hands moved to her back and she felt him tug her against his chest. He smelled like a wood burning stove mixed with pine needles and laundry detergent. He smelled like heaven. When they parted El went back to resting her head on his thigh.

"What do you remember when you think about us being lost?" Mike asked, his fingers had found her hair again.

El turned visibly red.

"Oh, now I *have* to know, if you're going to blush without even saying anything." Mike was smiling down on her and he just looked so *pretty*.

"Ugh, okay, I guess it's only fair. I remember when you stopped us from going too far. I was kind of disappointed. For all I knew we were going to die out there and I wanted to..." She trailed off.

"Yeah. I know. So did I."

"Do you still?" She asked, almost too quiet for him to hear.

He stopped running his fingers through her hair. She looked at him. He was looking at her intensely.

"All the time."

He shifted so that he was lying down and she moved up so he could put his arm around her. They looked at the sky together.

"Do you think our friends would ever want to go camping? Like, all of us?" El wondered.

"Probably. You know, if they don't have to hike too far or carry too much. If we allow them to complain they'd probably enjoy it." Mike laughed softly.

"I think it would be fun. That's something I'd like to do. If you share a tent with me." El said, moving her head so that she was face to face with Mike.

"We can ask them. But you know all you have to do is say the word and we can go camping ourselves any time. I think we've proven that we can handle it. And I'll totally share a tent with you. Sleeping bag too." Mike hugged her and she giggled. Then she kissed him again as they lay on the blanket. Her leg went over his as he pulled her into his side. She put her hand on his cheek as her lips touched his, gentle, barely ghosting over his mouth and then kissing with determination, softly sucking his bottom lip until he returned the favor, causing a breathy moan to escape.

"El? Do you want to be my girlfriend? I know I said all that stuff about words—"

"Yes. I definitely do." She kissed him again. To show him.

They finished the berries and packed everything back up. They wanted to be back at the car before the sun set so when they got back to Hawkins it wasn't too late and maybe El could stay and watch a movie with Mike again. She'd had the best day. She couldn't believe

that he had asked her to be his girlfriend. She was almost giddy with excitement.

Mike's parents weren't home when they got there and they were surprised to have the house to themselves. They sat on the basement sofa and started to make out again. A few minutes into it though, Mike pulled back. He had a furrowed look on his face and his eyes seemed a little glassy.

"What's wrong?" El asked. His face looked different than it had a little while ago.

"My head just really hurts all of a sudden. Maybe it was from being out in the trees today. I'm sorry. I want to do other things."

She got up and went to the basement bathroom, looking in the medicine cabinet. She found what she was looking for and got a cup of water as well. She went back to Mike and had him take the pills. Sitting back down on the sofa, she pulled him down into her lap and rubbed his head, massaging gently in the places she thought it might hurt. His temples, the back of his head, his forehead. She lightly scratched his scalp with her fingernails and Mike sighed, feeling a ripple of tenderness course from his head to his toes. She pulled the blanket off the back of the couch and spread it over his body and shoulders.

"I'll stay as long as you need me to. Just close your eyes and try to relax. We can talk to everyone soon about us all going camping together." Her voice was soothing, quiet and tranquil, and it was lulling him to sleep. "Hopefully they'll all want to go. I really like them. I like having friends. It's all because of you."

Her fingers in his hair caused warm waves of contentment to rush through his body. He snuggled into her leg, putting his hand on the thigh he was using as a pillow. His head was hurting but he felt so loved at the moment that it didn't matter. She didn't need to say it. He knew.

A/N: Sorry so much dialogue in this one! Things will pick up soon. Just bear with me. Mike just has a headache, he's not dying or anything. The Party will be in the next chapter. I hope

Mike and El can talk them into going camping. I think that would be fun.

3. Chapter 3

Okay, about to start earning that M rating in this chapter, if slowly...

It was a rare day when Max had time to eat lunch with the rest of the Party at school. The air was consistently getting colder out, with November gone and December creeping its way by. Mike took advantage of everyone being present to test the waters of a possible camping trip. He expected complaining from Dustin and indifference from Lucas, but he was surprised when everyone seemed to think it was a good idea, as long as they didn't get lost and didn't have to walk too far. El was the most excited. Her smile warmed Mike's heart when she realized that they all were agreeing to go. They just had to pick a date. They decided to go two weekends before Christmas. Everyone hoped the snow would hold off just a little longer, but all agreed that they could build a bigger fire.

El pulled Max aside as the bell rang signaling the end of lunch. Students filled the hallway on their way to their next class.

"Thanks for being so cool about the camping trip. I think it will be really fun." El said to her.

"I actually do too. I've wanted to hang out with Lucas but we just never get a chance. This will force us to get closer. Maybe not as close as you and Mike..." Max gently punched El on the shoulder, causing both girls to laugh. "How's that going, by the way?"

"He's my boyfriend." El tried to keep from smiling too wide but she failed.

"Nice. I knew it was just a matter of time. Will we even see you two when we go camping together?" She was only half-kidding.

"Of course. We will hang out with you the whole time. Well, probably." She looked at Max with her bottom lip between her teeth. "I'll catch up with you later, Max. I'm going to be late for chemistry." El smiled and hurried down the hall.

The weekend before the camping trip everyone was at Mike's to hang out and also to plan their adventure. Mike's mom had agreed that they could all sleep over like they did when they were younger, thinking that since both Max and El were there it would cut down on the chances of anything inappropriate happening. Dustin was concerned about snacks so Max had appointed him Commander in Snack and he was pleased with his title. Will was sitting in the floor and everyone was chatting when he blurted (which was strange for Will), "we should play truth or dare while we're there. I know it's overdone but no one does it in the forest at night. It could be cool."

Lucas started to protest but Max stopped him. "What if we all came up with dares now and saved them? When we're there if someone picks dare we can draw one from a hat...like from Dustin's hat, and it will be random and fair. And truths will be truths so that wouldn't change."

It seemed like a good idea. Mike grabbed a notepad he kept in the basement and they all started writing dares.

"Remember that we'll be in a dark forest so keep that in mind. We don't need any broken ankles." El said. She was *not* planning on another ankle injury.

There were snickers amongst them as they wrote dares that they thought would be funny. Will offered to keep them all safe until the trip. He was probably the most trustworthy and least likely to read them before it was time so no one took issue with him being the "dare treasurer" of sorts.

"We can tell ghost stories too. At least I can. I know some." Dustin said.

"So can I." Lucas countered.

"Okay, okay, anyone who knows any *good* ghost stories is free to tell them. But they have to be good. No hooks for hands or bloody Mary or *she's been dead for ten years* stories. Good ones." Max decreed.

El and Mike were listening to the conversation but they had retreated to the sofa where they were snuggling and kissing, until Dustin

looked over at them.

"Come on, guys. We're having an important meeting here!"

"Sorry, Dustin." They looked at each other, sharing a knowing glance that said, *just wait until they fall asleep.*

As the evening progressed everyone wanted to change into their pajamas. Mike told the girls to use the basement bathroom. The boys changed quickly in the basement while Mike went upstairs to brush his teeth and change his clothes. He went into his bedroom and grabbed a pair of flannel pajama pants from his drawer and after shucking off his jeans began to put on the flannel pants. He stopped and thought for a minute before he sighed. He wasn't sure he should do it but it wasn't like anything *had* to happen. Maybe she wouldn't even notice. He dropped the pants before he'd gotten them all the way up. He kicked off his boxers, tossing them in his hamper, and put the pajama pants back on.

Max and El were in the bathroom changing. Max was brushing her teeth while El put on her sleeping attire. She was wearing a white crop top t-shirt and baggy flannel pants that hung low on her waist due to being a little too big on her. She waited for Max to finish and then she brushed her own teeth.

"Are you guys going to do anything tonight?" Max asked El as El was rinsing her mouth of toothpaste.

"I don't know. You guys are all here."

"Yeah, but you could be quiet. And the boys sleep like the dead." Max extended.

"What about you?" El smirked at Max.

"I *am* tired. But I wouldn't say anything even if I was awake." She winked at El.

"We haven't really done anything yet but I don't know that tonight will be the night."

"Do you want to do anything with him?" Max asked, genuinely

interested.

El smiled. She couldn't contain it. "Um, I definitely do."

When they walked back into the main room of the basement Will and Dustin were discussing the X-Men while Lucas tried to find something on the television. Mike appeared a few minutes later. He smiled at El as he walked down the stairs carrying a sleeping bag and a pillow. *Holy shit! She is so fucking hot*, he thought to himself. Lucas unrolled his sleeping bag and El noticed that Max set hers up not too far away from him. Dustin and Will were opposite each other where they could still see the television.

A while later, soft snores could be heard emitting from the sleeping bundles on the floor, with an occasional louder snore coming from Dustin. They had drifted to sleep one by one, with Lucas finally snapping off the television when he saw that everyone else was asleep.

Mike waited until he was sure that everyone was out, their breathing all steady and no more whispers or snickering could be heard. He was lying next to El near the back of the room, away from the television and next to the sofa, so that from certain angles only their legs were visible if there happened to be light. But there was no light. They had one sleeping bag opened underneath them and the other was being used on top as a blanket to cover them both.

He turned to his side, facing her. Due to the darkness of the room he couldn't see much but he could smell her shampoo and he could hear her breathing softly. She was turned on her side as well. He let his fingers trace over her shoulder and down her arm slowly, drawing circles with his forefinger on her palm once he reached her hand. He leaned forward and kissed her eyelids one by one, barely touching her with his lips. His hand came back up to her head and he tucked her hair behind her ear, pushing it back and then following the curve of her ear with his finger, lightly touching the soft skin there. She stirred.

"Hi." She said, barely making any sound, not wanting to wake anyone up.

"Hey."

They knew they couldn't talk much. Both of them were afraid of being caught by their friends. So they just acted. Mike pulled her to him and they were kissing, being soft and slow at first but then getting more heated. He was on his back and he pulled her onto him, her legs going over him so that she was lying on top of him. His hands moved up her shirt, rubbing her bare back under the fabric. She was so warm.

El was enjoying herself but was becoming more annoyed by the minute at the way her baggy pants were riding up her legs as she moved and making her feel encumbered. She tried to ignore it but finally she'd had enough.

"I'm sorry." She whispered, sliding off of Mike. Before he could get too disappointed he could feel and hear her moving beside him. He didn't know what was going on. In a minute she was back on him. She had taken off her pants. He felt her smooth legs when he moved his hands to her hips to pull her closer. El could sense his confusion.

"They were bothering me. I had to take them off."

He needed no more explanation. He was not going to complain about her bare legs wrapping around him or about being able to touch her skin where he had never touched it before.

El thought the feeling of Mike's hands on her back, under her shirt, was one of the best feelings she'd felt. She liked the way he spread his fingers out so that pretty much her entire back was covered by his hands. He would pull her closer to him as he kissed her neck. She moved her hands to the hem of his t-shirt and pulled it up slightly until he realized what she wanted. He then stopped what he was doing so he could sit up and take the shirt off. He tossed it beside them and they continued kissing. Mike's hands moved slowly from her back down, finally resting on her ass.

She tried not to squeal. She thought she managed. He had turned her so she was once again on her side. Her leg was still slung over his waist. He ran his fingers over her abdomen and got closer to her breasts. He was moving so slowly. She just wanted him to get there

already. When she finally felt his fingertips brush the underside of her left breast she stifled a moan. His thumb nimbly skimmed her nipple as he squeezed with the rest of his hand. The only thing she could do to keep from making noise was kiss him, hoping that would lessen any sounds she made.

She had her hands in his hair, they were fisted into balls due to her trying to keep her noise level down. His hands felt so nice on her, she wanted to feel them in other places but wasn't sure how to make it happen. She finally took a chance and pulled back from kissing him. She moved her hand from his hair, placing it on top of his hand that was under her shirt. In a moment of fearlessness she guided his hand down, past her navel, leaving it to rest on the thin elastic waistband of her panties.

She could hear him gulp. He still wasn't moving his hand from where she had left it so she covered it with her own again and moved it down more, over the soft fabric of her panties, encouraging him to touch her there.

He was tentative at first, not believing what he was doing, and then he started working in earnest, rubbing small circles with his first two fingers on the outside of her underwear, feeling at first a little dampness and then saturation of the material. She moved her head to his ear so she could whisper very softly.

"Take them off."

He kissed her and she felt his hands move to the waistband and push her panties down, moving over her butt and getting caught on her hips since she had her leg over his waist. He moved her leg so that he could pull them down all the way. Once they were off she climbed back on him. She was lying on top of him, his bare chest touching her almost bare one since her shirt had moved up over her breasts. He moved his hand back to where it had been.

"Oh, my god. That's so *good*." El whispered. His hand had found the spot she needed it in most. His thumb was gently rubbing in just the right place as he teased her with his finger, just one to start with.

Since she was on top of him she was not unaware of his own arousal.

She moved herself to the side of him just slightly so she could put her hand where she wanted it. Mike felt her slide her fingers through the fly of his pajama pants. Her hand brushed against his hard cock, only the thin flannel of his pants between them.

"You're not wearing any boxers?" She asked, the unexpected gesture making her smile.

"Is that okay?" He asked, his voice only audible to her.

She just kissed him and he felt her fingers wrap around his shaft.

"Keep doing what you're doing." She breathed, pumping him with her hand as he kept up his pace on her. He had moved two fingers in now and she was having to hide her face in his neck occasionally to keep from crying out in ecstasy.

"El, oh, fuck. Oh, god, your hand feels so good." Mike said, trying to be quiet. He had one hand inside her but with the other he pulled her closer to him so that they were rubbing each other only centimeters apart. She had pushed the open fly of his pants around his member and if she'd wanted to she easily could have slid herself onto it. But she couldn't do that with their friends sleeping just a little ways away.

Mike's hand was drenched. Every once in a while due to their proximity the tip of his dick would rub against her stomach. The sensation of feeling it rub against her while his fingers were massaging her and making her writhe was almost more than he could handle. He resisted the urge to pull her close and rub himself on her until he found release. He liked what they were doing though. He liked that they were making each other feel good at the same time. He just hoped he could be quiet when what was about to happen finally overtook him. Her hand felt so nice, so soft but applying just the right amount of pressure. She would stop pumping and play with the head of his cock, softly caressing it before she turned her attention back to the shaft. It was not going to be long for him now.

He pulled his fingers out of her for a second, tracing her outer lips, barely touching her. He waited until she was almost begging him to start again. He had her so worked up that when he slipped his finger

back in and his thumb touched her most sensitive spot he could feel her walls start to tremble.

"Mike, something is happening. I don't want you to stop. Please..." She murmured frantically into his ear. She was moving herself on his hand. He loved it.

"El, I won't stop. You don't stop either. And don't scream. Just breathe. You are so amazing."

"M-M-Mike..." She had her head in his neck again, hoping to be as quiet as she could. She was coming undone. Mike could feel it.

"Shhh, that's good. Don't stop, El. Oh, fuck, please don't stop." He let go then, having felt her quiver around his hand, her body slumping onto his. Her hand didn't stop though and he felt her keep pumping him until he was empty. Both panting, they relaxed into each other.

"Holy shit, that was awesome." He whispered. She was lying on top of him, not even caring about the mess underneath her. He could feel her smiling against his throat.

"I like your hands." She said. She was so tired that she thought she wasn't making sense but he knew what she meant.

"I like *you*." He said back, kissing her before wrapping her in his arms.

They took turns cleaning themselves up, each going to the bathroom as quietly as they could. El didn't bother with putting her panties back on, choosing to just wear her pants. Mike cleaned himself up and put his shirt back on. Back under the covers, they kissed a little more, softly giggling. Mike folded her into his arms and they went to sleep, both content.

The next morning Dustin was the first one up, followed by Max.

"Why are all of these board games on the floor? I know they were stacked on the shelf last night. I was looking at them before I fell asleep." Max asked. Dustin was clueless.

"Weird. Maybe someone was sleepwalking." He mused.

The others awoke not long after. Lucas claimed that he'd had the strangest dreams and Will said that he had slept like a log. Dustin pointed to the games on the floor and suggested that maybe Lucas was responsible.

"No way, man. I don't sleepwalk."

"Well I guess they just moved themselves." Max suggested.

"Just pick them back up and put them back on the shelf." Mike said, walking to the games. "Here, I'll do it. See? All better."

He crossed back to El. She gave him an apologetic look. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and kissed her. He whispered softly into her ear, "if I could move stuff I would have too. It was *that* good."

"They're always in their own world. Camping should be fun." Max scoffed to the other boys, all of them laughing. It was all in good fun. Mike and El deserved to be happy. Max knew she would be asking El later what had happened the night before. She looked at them, how El was sitting on Mike's lap and he was rubbing her back. She noticed how gentle Mike was with her and how they looked at each other like they might disappear if they looked away, the tender kisses between them that said so much. She was looking at *love*. It was hard to miss. It was obvious.

A/N: Next chapter is the campout. Thanks for sticking with me.

4. Chapter 4

Lace your boots up, kiddies! Enjoy the camping trip...

El was so excited for the upcoming campout that she could barely sleep the night before. She still had to make it through the entire day of school that Friday and then they could all leave. They were all going to pile into Mike's mom's car, squeezing three people in front and three people in the back. There would be just enough room in the trunk for all of their camping gear. They would hurry after school to get to Mike's so they could leave before 4:30 and have enough time to set up the tents and build a fire.

At school that day El kept getting distracted in class. She couldn't stop thinking about the sleepover at Mike's and what might happen when they went camping. She knew it would be cold but she was still thrilled at the prospect of spending more time alone with him. Their friends would be there, but it was still different than being around adults. The last time they had been alone in a tent they had been lost in the woods. Now they had actually *done things* and she couldn't stop thinking about them, how his hands felt, how he smelled, how his skin felt against hers. The end of the school day was taking forever.

Finally the bell rang and they could all start the weekend. She practically ran out of the building to Hop's waiting car. She had been so adamant that he be there on time that day that he was afraid of how upset she might get if he was late, so he made sure not to be late.

Hop took advantage of the ride to their house to get her things.

"So, do we need to talk about boundaries and boys?" He started. It wasn't really a conversation he wanted to have but he felt he needed to anyway.

"Not really. I know what to do, or not to do. Mike would never do anything I didn't want him to anyway."

He looked at her, at how excited she was. *It's not really Mike I'm worried about.*

"Anyway it's going to be really cold you know. I don't see me stripping down this time of year." She smirked at him. Who was this kid?

"I just want to be sure that you respect yourself and that Mike respects you."

"He does. I know he does, Hop."

"You have my permission to fling him off a cliff if he tries anything you don't like. Okay?"

She laughed. "I'll keep that in mind."

Dustin had fulfilled his duty and brought all the food they'd need, having collected money from everyone earlier in the week. Will had all of the dares they had written earlier, El had her camera, and Lucas and Mike had everything they would need for setting up the tents. Max was going to supervise. They all got in the car and happily chatted while Mike drove them to the spot he had found that he thought would be a perfect camping spot. No one would have to walk far yet it seemed tucked away, secluded and untouched. He had been proud of himself when he found it. Now El was seated beside him and Will was in the front beside her. Dustin, Max, and Lucas rode in the back. Mike liked the way El's hand would brush again his leg occasionally and she would leave it there until she had to use her hand again to gesture at something.

They had to work quickly when they arrived as the sun was already starting to drop in the sky. Mike and Lucas started on the tents while Dustin, Will, Max, and El collected rocks for the fire pit. They built it in between a log that was broken in half which would be ideal for seating and two tree stumps that were positioned perfectly. Mike might not have ever been able to find a better spot than he had. They would easily be able to sit around the fire in a small circle, just like El had pictured in her mind. Lucas was fast and had his tent and the one Dustin and Will would use set up before Mike finished his. They had already discussed it and Dustin and Will were sharing a tent while Lucas and Max shared another. Max didn't think anything major would happen, she wasn't ready for it yet, but she did want to spend more time with Lucas. It went without saying that Mike and El

would share.

After the pit was complete, Max and El set off to collect wood for the fire while Dustin and Will took all of the sleeping bags to the tents and started laying them out in each one. The girls brought the wood and Mike started the fire. They all roasted hot dogs and ate, talking about everything and nothing.

After dinner they were all sitting around the fire. Dustin wanted to tell ghost stories and he and Lucas went back and forth a few times trying to outdo one another.

Dustin started. "There was a guy and he was visiting some place in a city where he had to spend the night at this big house. That night he heard a car pull into the driveway so he looked out the window and he saw like a long black hearse type car. The driver got out and looked up at the window, right at the guy, and said to him, *we have room for one more*. The driver's face was hideous and vile so the guy quickly got back into bed. The next morning he had to go to a big office for a meeting and he was going to take the elevator but it seemed full when he got near it so he decided to take the next one. A lady inside the elevator car held the door and said to him, *we have room for one more* but he kindly thanked her and said he'd wait. That elevator full of people crashed after the doors closed and everyone was killed."

"I can do better than that," Lucas scoffed. "There was this farmer and he loved his daughter will all of his heart. She fell in love with this poor guy named Jim. Her father didn't think Jim was good enough for her so he arranged for Jim to be killed, only his daughter and Jim's family thought he died of some accident or something legitimate. A few years later Jim showed up where the daughter was living and told her that her father had sent for her. Jim had come on his best horse to take her to him. As they were riding she had her arms around him. He complained of a headache and she felt him and said he was freezing and used her handkerchief to tie around his cold head. When they arrived at her father's place they went to his door. He opened it and seemed surprised to see her, saying that he hadn't sent for her. She turned and Jim was no longer standing next to her. The father felt bad and told her the truth about what had happened to Jim but she swore that he had just been right there with her. They

had Jim's parents exhume his grave and he was in the coffin...*with her handkerchief tied around his head.*

El had listened closely to the stories. The one Lucas told made her sad.

"Think that's sad? I've got a sad one." Dustin's voice sounded forlorn. "It was Christmastime and the high school was having a dance. John met a girl named Debbie there and they danced and had the best time. It was getting close to 11:00 and she asked him if he could give her a ride home. She said she had crashed her car into a tree on the way there and it couldn't be driven anymore. As he neared her neighborhood, a place he wasn't familiar with, she told him he could just let her out there and she could walk because she didn't live far and the road conditions weren't the best. He asked if he could see her again and she said she'd really like that. Before she got out of the car he gave her a piece of Christmas tinsel he had taken from the dance. She put it in her hair. Then he drove away. It occurred to him that he didn't even know her last name so he turned around to go back and ask. As he drove back through where he had just dropped her off a minute or two ago a dense fog encased his car and he didn't see any sign of Debbie walking anywhere. He drove a little further and there was wreckage of a car crashed into a tree. It was in flames. He stopped and ran to see if he could help. There was a person inside, trapped. It was Debbie. She had tinsel in her hair."

Everyone was silent, especially El. Max noticed.

"Okay, that was fun. You guys really know how to keep the party going." She rolled her eyes. "Will, where are those dares we made? We need to liven up this soiree." She grabbed Dustin's hat off his head. He grumbled.

On one half of the broken log sat Dustin and Will. There was a tree stump next to it and Mike sat on that, El sitting on a folded blanket on the ground in front of him with her head between his knees. Max sat to Mike's left on the other half of the broken log and Lucas was sitting beside her, all of their seats circling the fire.

"Dustin is on the end so let's start with him and whomever he asks will go next and so on and so forth." Will said. "If you choose dare

you have to do it, no matter what it is. *No matter what.*"

Dustin looked at his friends, trying to decide who he would choose to ask first.

"Lucas, truth or dare?"

"Truth. I have nothing to hide." Lucas said confidently.

"Hmm, that so? Okay, Lucas." Dustin suddenly grinned, an evil glint in his eye. "Who would you rather walk in on while they're changing, Max or El?"

Both girls turned red. El looked at the ground.

"Asshole." Lucas flipped Dustin off.

"Hey, you chose truth."

"Max, okay? Damn. Okay. *My turn.*" He only pretended to try to choose his target.

"Dustin. Truth or dare?"

"I'm not afraid. Dare." Will had the hat so he stuck his hand in to choose a slip of paper. He pulled it out and read it.

"Dustin, you have to strip naked and run around the fire."

"What? Okay, okay. You think I won't? Watch me." He flung off his coat and shoes and then unceremoniously dropped the rest of his clothes. "Ladies, I apologize if I scare you with this thing," he said in a lowered voice. Max and El were rolling on the ground laughing. Dustin ran naked around them all twice and then cursed about how cold he was and quickly got dressed again.

"My turn again. Will, truth or dare?" Dustin asked, hugging himself for warmth as he moved himself closer to the fire.

"Dare!" Will was ready. Since he was holding the hat already he grabbed the first slip from the top of the pile. "I have to stuff as many marshmallows into my mouth as possible and then sing *Purple Rain*.

"Really? Max?"

"Hey, it's all anonymous. You don't know that *I* wrote it."

Dustin tossed Will the marshmallows. He got twelve in his mouth and then proceeded to try to sing. Prince would not have been proud. It was very funny though. Will spat out the marshmallows, being mindful to do it away from the group, and then chose his victim.

"El, truth or dare?"

She thought about it for a moment. She knew what kinds of dares she had written but had no idea what the others had written. She was timid about choosing a dare.

"Truth."

"Are you in love with Mike?"

All eyes were on El. She could feel their stares. She could feel panic building up inside her and then she felt a soft hand on her shoulder, remembering that Mike was sitting right behind her, protecting her from any cold wind that blew.

"Yes." She said softly, afraid to look up.

"Thought so." Dustin smiled, breaking the tension. He really made her feel better, not making a big deal about it at all. In no time he reminded her that now it was her turn and she could choose someone to ask.

"Okay, Max, truth or dare?" She was feeling better about the game. Mike still had his hand on her shoulder.

"Dare. I'm curious about what's in the hat."

Will reached in and read the dare to himself. He looked at Dustin and showed him what it said. They both looked at each other, clearly uncomfortable.

"Come on, what does it say?" Max asked.

"I'm going to pick a different one." Will was saying.

"That's not what we agreed on. We said *no matter what*, remember?" Mike argued.

"Mike, just let him pick another one. Really." Dustin told his friend.

"Just read it, Will. These are the rules we made!" Mike was standing his ground.

Will sighed. He really didn't want to give this dare.

"Okay, Max. You have to French kiss the person sitting directly to your right."

Oh. Mike felt like an ass.

El looked up to see who Max would have to kiss. *Oh no. Oh shit.*

"Let's just get this over with quickly." Mike was saying. He wished he hadn't been so steadfast in his rule abiding. He leaned in and they kissed. There was no passion, it felt to Mike like kissing his sister. But El still got up and walked away quietly.

Mike followed her, leaving the group behind at the fire. She wasn't running so she was easy to catch. She stopped at the edge of the lake. The campsite was nestled just above it with a pristine view of the water. When he caught up to her she was trying to wipe tears away.

"El, I'm sorry. I should have listened to Will and Dustin. I'm so sorry. Please look at me." Every time he tried to get in front of her she turned away from him.

"It's fine. I don't own you. You can do whatever you want." She said. He could see her tears in the moonlight.

"I only want to kiss *you*. I should have listened to them but I was being stupid and then I felt like I had dug myself into a hole and I had to go through with it but I shouldn't have. I'm sorry." He pulled her into him and she let him but she still just stood there, not embracing him back.

"El, I love you. I really do."

She pulled away enough to look at him. His face was sincere, his eyes full of concern and apology.

"You do?"

His hand went into her hair and she felt the familiar tingle she always got when he did that. He leaned forward and their lips touched, barely, then softly, and then finally she let her arms move around him and they kissed with purpose.

"I *really* do." Mike whispered when their heads parted. Their arms remained tightly wrapped around each other. "I *really* love you."

"Let's go to the tent." El took his hand and pulled him as she started to walk back toward their friends.

When they got back everyone asked if she was okay and Max hugged her and said she was sorry. El hugged her back and told her that it was okay, that she wasn't mad. Mike and El said goodnight to everyone and disappeared into their tent, taking off their shoes before they climbed inside. The others sat around the fire, still talking.

Mike had positioned his tent in such a way that as long as they whispered he didn't think anyone would be able to hear them. He wanted to be able to say something to El if he needed to and he wanted to not have to be as quiet as they'd had to be at his sleepover. Once in the tent El took off her jeans and her bra, clearly getting ready for bed. Mike couldn't help but watch as the denim slid down her smooth, toned legs and she gracefully stepped out of the pants. Their sleeping bags were filled with goose down so he knew they would be warm enough and she wouldn't have to wear pants to sleep in but he hadn't known she'd actually strip down to just her panties and shirt. His mouth felt dry.

El looked at him. "Is that what you're going to sleep in?" She asked.

"Um, I mean, no. I just haven't changed yet. I was watching you." Mike started to unbutton his jeans and kick them off. El smiled at

him.

"Do you think you could massage my feet again, Mike? I've been thinking about that."

"Is that what you want me to do?"

"Yes."

She unzipped one of the sleeping bags and sat inside it. Mike was in the other one and he unzipped it so that they could reach each other from their positions. El let both of her feet rest in the area between his legs which formed a V with the way he was sitting. Her toes grazed his upper thighs. He started again with her toes, not having to be as mindful about not hurting her ankle now but still being very gentle. He rubbed them in a circular motion, starting at her pinky toe and then moving slowly up until he had gotten to each one. She sighed. He let his fingers lightly ghost over the top of her foot, sending shivers throughout her. This time though she didn't make him stop. He used his thumbs to massage the sole of her foot, pushing with slight force in concentric circles, bigger to smaller, from the outside edge of her foot to the instep. Then he did the same thing to the other foot. He would run his hand along the top of her foot, gently scratching, and then continue up her calf for as far as his arm would reach. This was new and El was enjoying it.

"Would you rub my back?" El asked, her eyes questioning and her voice sexy.

"Just lie down on your stomach." Mike moved to her side. He started gently caressing her back, pushing her shirt up so it wouldn't irritate her skin as his hands moved over her. He was afraid she might be cold but she assured him that at that time she definitely was not cold.

El had liked the foot massage a lot but this was different. Mike would rub her shoulders and then his hands would move down, gently tracing her spine, and stop just above her panty line. Sometimes his hands would go a little further around her sides and she could feel his fingers getting closer to the swell of her breasts with each pass. It was causing her to fidget.

"Are you okay?" Mike asked.

"Yes, I think you're just in an odd position." She replied.

She felt Mike shift and then felt his legs on either side of her, straddling her upper thighs so he could have a better angle.

Oh my god. I can feel him. This is amazing. El thought, trying to keep herself from pushing back on him and embarrassing herself. He would start at her head, his hands in her hair, barely touching her scalp, which caused her to tingle even more, and then he would move both hands to the sides of her neck, his thumbs at the base of her skull. He pressed and pushed his thumbs outward and up at the same time and she felt a rush of calm wash over her. He did it again. Then his hands moved to her shoulders. She felt him start to scratch her back, which was mostly bare from how he'd pushed her shirt up, and shivers of pleasure enveloped her.

He kept slowly moving down. He had scooted his body lower so that now he was straddling the backs of her knees. She felt his hands move over her ass, she could feel them hovering over it but he wasn't touching her. It was driving her crazy.

"Mike." She said, trying to turn her head around to look at him.

"Is this okay?" He asked, looking up from her almost bare backside. She only nodded. He moved his hands lower until his palms were on her, his hands covering her entire ass. He squeezed and she moaned softly. He started massaging there. She didn't know what to think as he exhibited the same care and attention he had given her feet earlier, using light pressure and circles and barely touching her skin. It was as if the lighter he touched her the more she felt it.

"Should I take these off?" He asked, his finger under the waistband of her panties. She didn't answer, just lifted herself enough that he could pull them down. She was so turned on she didn't know if she could speak. She felt them slide away, Mike having moved off of her long enough to remove the garment. Then she felt his hands again. He went back to her upper back. He knew he was teasing her now. He wanted to see how long she could last before she said something about it.

He leaned forward over her. She felt him kiss the back of her neck and could feel his boxers resting on her bare skin. She could also feel what was inside the boxers. As he was lying over her, his warm lips running over her neck and shoulders, she pushed herself back on him. This time *he* moaned.

"Oh, my god, El. That feels so good." His mouth was very near her ear and he need only whisper. She felt him move his hands under her, crossing his arms underneath her, cradling her breasts in his hands from either side. He pulled her close and she felt him press himself into her again.

"I want to turn over." El said from underneath him. She'd had enough of him on her back and she needed to be able to use her arms and feel him in other ways. He moved enough to give her room to turn and then was on top of her again. Now she could kiss him. He held her as they kissed, his boxers damp from her arousal. He was resting between her legs, only his boxers between them. She could feel him through the thin fabric. His cock was pushing right against where she needed it to push from his position. She didn't know it would feel so good.

"You feel amazing, El. Oh, shit, I can't believe this. I never thought this would feel like this. I'm sorry I don't have any protection. I'm an idiot." Mike said between kisses. He was trying to hold back but it felt so good sliding in between her folds, even if he did have his boxers on.

"It's okay. Another time. I like this too." She was moaning between words and trying to not cry out. He was rubbing her in the perfect place every time he moved himself forward.

"Just tell me if I'm being too heavy or too rough." He said, kissing her neck.

For some weird reason she started talking, quietly, so only he could hear. He couldn't believe what she was saying.

"This feels so good. I wouldn't even care if your fly opened and you slipped inside me. It would be just the tip and you would try to pull back but I don't think I'd want you to. I don't think I'd *let* you. You

would look down and watch yourself enter me. I'd feel you fill me up with your big cock..."

She wasn't going to get to finish talking. She was *there* and Mike was too.

"Oh, fuck, El, I'm coming right now." Mike pushed forward again. He felt her fists in his hair. She had pulled him down to her and he heard her soft squeal as she came with him. He stayed where he was, lying on top of her naked form.

"Fuck. You are so hot. I love you so much." Mike looked up at her from where he was, still in between her legs.

"I love you too."

They did put their clothes back on, or at least, slept in more clothing than just underwear. El moved into Mike's sleeping bag and they had no trouble staying warm throughout the night. Before they fell asleep they talked some more, only being heard by each other.

"Did you have a fun camping trip?" Mike asked. He hoped the incident with Max was a distant memory.

He was holding her against his chest and she squeezed his arm as she said, "yes. I'm sorry I got upset when we played truth or dare. I know that kiss didn't mean anything."

"I still should have listened to Will and Dustin. They were trying to help and I was being a fool."

"It's okay. I understand."

"I really do love you, El."

"I really do love you too."

The next morning everyone packed up their things and started back to Hawkins. While the boys were packing the tents Max and El went down to look at the lake.

"So did you and Mike, *you know?*" Max asked.

"Well, not exactly. This wasn't the time."

"Are you guys okay? I'm so sorry about the game last night. I swear, it was like kissing my dad. It was not hot. I did *not* enjoy it."

"We're okay. We're better than okay. Don't worry Max. We understand each other. We love each other." El smiled. Max hugged her.

On the way back, El couldn't help getting lost in her own thoughts. Her hand was resting on Mike's thigh again and every now and then he would cover it with his own, his thumb tracing small circles on the back of it. She couldn't help but wonder when they *would* get the chance to do everything they wanted to do. Maybe things like that shouldn't always be planned though. Maybe the spontaneity is some of the excitement. They should just both be ready. Ready for anything.

A/N: Hooray for camping y'all! I wonder what's next for these guys...

5. Chapter 5

Christmas was supposed to be a happy time but when El found out that Mike was going to visit relatives and would be gone for the majority of the break she started to get melancholy. She tried to stay positive but she had wanted to spend as much time with him as she could and had been looking forward to being with him at Christmas. She wanted the magic and the mistletoe. She also hadn't thought of a very good gift to give him. She wanted it to be special.

"You don't have to get me anything. Just having you around is enough." Mike was packing his clothes for his trip and El was watching him from her perch on his bed. He was leaving the next day.

She sighed. "I still want to. Even though you won't be here." Her voice got softer and she looked down. Mike noticed.

"I'll be back a couple of days before New Year's. I wish I didn't have to go too. I'll miss you." He stopped putting clothes in his suitcase and sat down beside her, taking her hand in his. He kissed the back of it.

I'm going to miss him so much, El thought. With her hand still in his she pulled him toward her, their lips meeting. She wanted to convey how much she was going to miss him, or she wanted to stash away the memory of kissing him to last her until he got back. Either way, she *needed* to kiss him right then.

"This is a good gift too." Mike said between kisses. She kissed him again, deeply, and an idea came to her suddenly. She pulled away enough to look at him.

"Do you have a Walkman?"

Mike nodded. "I'm bringing it with me so I don't have to listen to Mom's and Holly's Christmas carols the whole way there. Did you need to borrow it?"

Perfect.

"No, I was just asking. I need to go. I just thought of something I have to do. What time are you leaving in the morning? I want to come kiss you goodbye."

Mike smiled. "I wish you didn't have to go right now. We're leaving tomorrow at 8:00 a.m."

"I'm sorry I have to go." She kissed his nose. "I need all the time I can get." She kissed his lips. "I'll see you in the morning," she whispered. One more kiss and then she was gone.

El felt a renewed sense of happiness as she walked quickly back to her house. She had to call Max. Time was of the essence.

Max got to El's house a short time later, bringing several tapes with her. Because of Hopper's police connections he had a special radio at the house so he could listen to calls and other police business more closely. It had an attached cassette deck and a microphone. The girls hoped they could make it work like El had in mind.

They tweaked the knobs and fiddled with the sound levels until they were satisfied that Max could record El with the vocals on the tape turned down and only the music playing. It took them longer than they had imagined so El would have to get everything right with a minimum of takes. Max pushed all the right buttons as El sang into the microphone. She wanted to sing for Mike and give it to him for Christmas, hoping to finish it before he left in the morning.

The first song was *Blackbird* by The Beatles. Before Max started the music El spoke into the microphone. Max had already pushed the record button on the machine.

"Mike, I'll miss you so much. I hope you have a merry Christmas. I love you." Then Max started the music and watched as El sang. Max couldn't believe what she was hearing.

They had made a list of the songs so everything would go more quickly. Max had cued everything so that she could just put the cassette in the machine and when she pressed play it would be ready for El to start singing. After *Blackbird* came *Live To Tell* by Madonna and then *Time After Time* by Cyndi Lauper. Max was diligent in being

precise on starting and stopping the music because El was doing so well that she didn't want to mess anything up for her. She was thinking she might want a copy for herself.

Next was *The Greatest Love of All* by Whitney Houston. Then she sang *I Want To Know What Love Is* by Foreigner followed by *Dreams* by Fleetwood Mac. She hoped Mike would like all of her choices. She finished up with *We Belong* by Pat Benatar, *Every Breath You Take* by The Police, and *Making Love Out of Nothing at All* by Air Supply. El had always loved that song.

"I'm going to need your help on this one." El said about *Making Love Out of Nothing at All*. "I need you to sing the *making love* parts at the chorus and the end. Do you know it well enough?"

"I love that song. I can do it." Max nodded.

Max's jaw was on the floor as she listened to El hit all the notes with accuracy.

Max looked at El when she was finished and made a motion with her head, trying to signal El to say something to end the tape. El understood.

"I'll see you soon, Mike. I hope you liked your gift."

Max pressed stop.

"Oh my god, El. That was amazing! I didn't know you could sing like *that!* That was so awesome. Mike is going to lose his shit."

"I have to be inspired. Or in the shower." She laughed. Max was going to visit her dad in California so wouldn't be there for Christmas either. El was going to miss her too.

El was up early the next morning. She was excited to see Mike and give him her gift, even though she wouldn't get to see his reaction to hearing it. Max had assured her that it was very good and that Mike would be very touched. Max didn't bullshit so El believed her.

As she arrived at Mike's it was just starting to snow. The air had that quiet quality where everything seems muffled as the snowflakes float

to the ground. It was very peaceful. Mike appeared lugging two suitcases. He had already slid them into the trunk of the car when he noticed El standing at the end of the driveway. His smile instantly made her feel warmer. She started toward him and he did the same. They met in the middle of the driveway, the snow falling softly around them.

"I got you a gift. You can open it in the car if you want to." El said as she placed a small package wrapped in green and silver paper into this hand.

"I'll open it now." Mike smiled, seeming excited, and ripped the paper off. He stared down at a blank looking cassette tape.

El explained. "I thought you could listen to it on your Walkman. I hope you like it." She said, leaning up on her tip toes to kiss him. The other Wheelers had exited the house and were about to get into the car.

"I'm sure I will. I love mixtapes." Mike said, not fully grasping the idea of what he was holding.

"I love *you*." She said where only he could hear. He pulled her close and hugged her, feeling how tightly she held on.

"I'll be back soon." He smiled and kissed her again. Everyone was waiting for him in the car. "I've got to go. Have a great Christmas, okay?" He hugged her one more time, whispering into her ear, "I love you too."

Then El watched him get into the car. Everyone waved at her as they drove away. She sighed and started walking home.

Mike waited until they had been on the road for about thirty minutes. His mom and sister were already singing along to their Christmas songs so Mike slipped his headphones over his ears and popped the tape into his Walkman. Pressing play, he wondered what songs she had put on it for him. As he listened his eyes got moist. His throat felt dry all of a sudden.

She's singing. She is singing to me.

It might have been the most beautiful thing he had ever been given. Holly looked over at him from her seat beside him in the back.

"Are you crying? You *are!* Why?"

"I just have a really amazing girlfriend, Holls."

On Christmas Eve El had been trying all day to be happy, to be positive. She had planned to attempt to cook dinner for Hopper and herself and things were going well until Hopper got called in to the station. There had been a break-in at a jewelry store and he would be spending all evening and probably most of the night dealing with the crime and then doing the paperwork that went with it. With all of the pent up sadness of Mike and even Max not being around, with her already having a lowered mood because she couldn't get out of her head, El blew up at Hopper a little bit. She didn't want to be left alone on Christmas Eve. It wasn't supposed to be that way. So they fought.

"You're leaving me *alone* on Christmas?" El, disbelieving.

"I have to go do this. It's my *job*. You like having a place to live? You like having food to eat? I'm sorry the timing is terrible but I have to go." Hopper was saying. He was trying to be patient.

El just seethed. "Everyone leaves me! I guess I would too if I could." She was crying.

"Kid, I'm not leaving you. Mike didn't *leave* you. Sometimes things just come up that we can't avoid."

"It's fine. *Go*. I'm used to being alone." She turned and walked down the hall to her bedroom. Hopper sighed. He grabbed his hat and his jacket and left for the station.

El threw herself onto her bed and buried her head in the pillows. She missed Mike. She hadn't talked to him in days and she felt like her heart was breaking. Having a nice Christmas Eve was supposed to take her mind off of the things that were making her sad.

After crying for a while she decided to go for a walk. It was early evening but the streetlights provided light and the snow on the

ground reflected that light so it seemed brighter. El walked through the streets, stopping once on the sidewalk in front of a house with a big picture window in the front. She could see the family inside and their Christmas tree. The kids looked happy and the parents had their arms around each other. El wished that had been her life *ever*. She had no idea what that must feel like.

She continued walking and found herself in front of Mike's house. She knew no one was home and it made her chest ache. She was thinking of how much she missed him when she realized she was at the back of the house, at the basement doorway. She looked at the knob and her head flicked slightly to the left. The door opened.

Just the smell of Mike's house made her feel better. Karen Wheeler's house always had a smell like she had just done laundry and had just baked cookies. It was inviting and warm and made El feel safe. She loved Mike's basement. She sat on the sofa for a while, just being there. Even with no one home she felt loved sitting down there.

She eventually got sleepy and since she knew Hopper wouldn't be back that night she made her way up the stairs to Mike's room. She just wanted to lie down on his bed for a little while. She just needed that. She entered his room and kicked off her shoes. She tossed her jacket to the floor. Of course Mike hadn't made his bed the morning they'd left. He had been in a hurry, probably had slept later than he should. She crawled into his bed and pulled the covers up around her. She was enveloped by the smell of *Mike*. He was in her nose and was all around her. She instantly felt happier. She was lying in his bed, the bedside table lamp illuminating the room, when her eyes landed on a small gift bag sitting on his desk. Curious, she got out of his bed and investigated.

It wasn't really closed, there was some tissue paper on the top but no tape or staples or anything keeping her from looking inside. The tag on the outside that had her name written on it in Mike's handwriting didn't help her curiosity. She gingerly removed the tissue paper and reached into the bag. She removed a velvet box and opened it. She really couldn't believe what she was seeing.

She held in her hand a bracelet, silver in color, maybe silver in actuality. She couldn't tell. It was about an inch wide and had

etchings all around it. She looked closely at them. The first was a heart, followed by a book, the number 011, then a tent, then a tree that looked broken, a camera, another heart, what looked to her like a pair of wings, an X-wing that looked like the one in the Star Wars video game, a strawberry, a campfire with a flame coming out of two little logs that were crossed, and another heart. The etchings weren't perfect but she could tell what they were and she knew that he had most likely made this himself. She *loved* it. It clearly chronicled their life together so far. She gently placed it back in the box and put everything back in the gift bag, being careful to not rip anything.

She decided to stay there for the night. She slipped off her jeans and crawled back into Mike's bed, once again relishing in the smell of him that drifted up around her. His pillow smelled the best. She snuggled into it. She might be alone this Christmas Eve but she felt more at peace now that she was surrounded by *Mike*. She closed her eyes and reached out to find him. It wasn't something she did often but she *could* do it and she just wanted to see him. He finally came into view. He was on a pulled out sofa bed and was reading a book. She looked closer and saw that it was *The Stand* by Stephen King. She smiled. She wished she could touch him. He looked so pretty sitting there, his head leaned over his book, his dark curls in his face. He looked so focused. She heard herself say, "Mike" very softly. He looked up, looking directly at her. She knew he couldn't hear her and couldn't see her but he looked like *something* had made him look up. He looked confused for a second and then went back to his book. El left him then. She had just wanted to see him. She could make it until he got home. She slept in his bed, hugging one of his pillows while her head rested on the other.

The next morning she reluctantly got out of Mike's bed. Before she went home she made the bed neatly and tidied the room, putting any dirty clothes she found on the floor into his hamper and straightening a stack of books that looked like it was about to topple off his desk. She made sure the door was locked and set off for home.

Hopper was there when she got home. He had made Eggos and bacon and eggs and was waiting for her. When she saw him she was afraid he would be mad that she had been gone all night.

"About time. It's Christmas morning. Did you want me to eat this all

by myself? Because I *will*." He remarked, not seeming at all angry.

El crossed to him and hugged him.

"Where have you been?" Hopper asked, a little less jovial.

"I went to Mike's. I know I shouldn't have but I felt so alone and I had unlocked the door and was in the basement before I even realized it. I didn't do anything or take anything. I just wanted to feel nearer to him. I got tired and slept there. I made the bed though. I left it better than I found it." El almost cried into his chest.

"It's okay. I know you felt alone. I don't really want you breaking and entering but it's okay this time." Hopper rubbed her back, trying to soothe her. "Let's eat before these eggs get cold."

The Hopper Christmas wasn't a total disaster. El had a fun day and was entertained by Hopper dancing to ridiculous records that he deemed *real music*. El wasn't sure it was her thing but it was fun to watch him. At least some of it was catchy. They had hot cocoa and watched Christmas movies. She got some new clothes and a new lens for her camera. She was very excited about the lens.

Three days before the end of the year Mike returned. El was waiting for him at his house, sitting on the porch reading. She decided that maybe it would be best to not be waiting *inside* the house when they got home. When they finally pulled into the driveway she had to stop herself from running to the car. She was trying to be cool but her heart was beating like a hummingbird's.

"El!" Mike cried out as he jumped out of the car. He ran to the porch to meet her. Once he got close enough he scooped her into his arms and she felt her feet leave the ground. "I missed you." He said into her hair.

"I missed you too. I'm glad you're home." She looked at him. With him still holding her up their faces were perfectly aligned. She leaned in, sighing as she felt him kiss her back. She had really missed this.

He finally set her back on the ground. He was grinning from ear to ear, his goofy lopsided grin that made her weak in her knees.

"I loved your Christmas gift. It was the best thing *ever*. I can't believe you made that for me. It made me cry. You can ask Holly."

"You liked it? I'm so glad. I was worried it wasn't that good."

"What? El, it was beautiful. It was *perfect*. I can't think of anything more perfect than hearing you sing to me. Just for me."

She smiled, her lower lip tucked into her teeth on one side, and looked down. She might *never* get used to his compliments.

"I have something for you too. Come in and I'll get it. It's in my room." Mike pulled her by the hand and they went inside. Mike dashed up the stairs while El waited in the living room. He was back quickly. He had the gift bag in his hand but even though El had already seen it she didn't think she'd have any trouble still looking surprised. She *was* still surprised that anyone would take the time to make her something so special.

Mike handed her the bag. "I hope you like this. I spent a lot of time on it. I know it's not perfect but it does mean something to me and I hope it means something to you." He was saying as she removed the tissue paper.

She took the bracelet out of the box and marveled at it again. In the light of the Christmas tree it looked even prettier than when she'd seen it in Mike's room. She ran her fingers over the etchings, feeling how they dipped into the metal.

"The hearts are for love, obviously, the book because you were reading when I first talked to you, the 011 because it's *you*, the tent because of being lost, the tree for when you told me your secret, the camera because you love photography, wings for when you saved us both, the X-wing for blowing up the Death Star and because you're a Jedi, a strawberry from our hike where I asked you to be my girlfriend, and the campfire for the campout."

El was speechless. She had figured as much but hearing him explain all the thought that he had put into the gift was so touching she didn't know what to say. So she turned to him, putting the bracelet on her wrist before burying her head in his chest. He put his arms

around her and held her there.

"I love this so much. You can't even imagine how much this means to me, Mike. This is the best gift anyone has ever given me." She looked up at him. He pulled her closer again and she felt them both shift a few steps backwards and to the left. When she looked back up he was smiling down at her. She followed his eyes as he looked up at the doorway they were now standing underneath. She saw the mistletoe hanging there.

"Merry Christmas, El." He said softly as he leaned down to her.

"Merry Christmas, Mike." She barely whispered as his lips met hers.

A/N: Next chapter will probably have the Party learning El's secret. Hope this one was okay. Thanks for reading!

6. Chapter 6

A few weeks after New Year's, El was sitting in Mike's basement. They had been doing their homework together since school had started back. El definitely didn't need Mike's help when it came to their studies but she liked sitting next to him while she did her work. Sometimes she would sneak glances at him, at how his face would scrunch up as he concentrated. And of course sometimes they would make out. She especially liked when *that* happened.

On that particular day El was trying to get Mike's attention. She had already finished her homework and wanted to do other things with Mike but he was still bent over his notebook scribbling equations into it. Usually he would look up at her every few minutes, smiling and getting lost in her eyes, but today he seemed focused on getting his work done. So El was trying to distract him.

First she sighed audibly. When that didn't work she tried again, a bit louder.

"What? I'm almost finished." Mike said, not looking up.

"I want you to be finished *now*." El whined.

She looked around the room. Mike's Millennium Falcon was sitting on the shelf in the corner. Concentrating, El made the Falcon hover right beside Mike's head. She tried not to giggle at the sight. Mike could feel the static beside him and looked up, noticing what was happening.

"Okay. You win. You are the coolest." He pulled her to him. The ship was still hovering as they started kissing.

What they didn't realize was that Dustin had stopped by to return a casserole dish that Karen had sent food to him in when his mother had been sick recently. Karen told him that Mike and El were in the basement doing homework and Dustin went downstairs just like he normally did. Only when he got a few steps down he saw the Millennium Falcon flying around the room while Mike and El were kissing on the sofa. It was lazily swooping and righting itself, even

banking left and right occasionally like in the movie.

"Son of a bitch." Dustin whispered. Then louder, "how is this happening?"

Mike and El jumped apart, startled and surprised to see their friend standing on the stairway. The Falcon dropped to the floor. Mike looked at El. He grabbed a tissue from the box on the end table and quickly wiped away the blood that had trickled out of her nose but Dustin had already noticed.

"How are you doing that?! *Who* is doing that?!" Dustin still sounded incredulous but he had made it to the bottom of the stairs.

Mike held El's hand, giving it a squeeze for comfort. "Now is your chance. I'm right here."

El looked at Dustin and took a deep breath. "It's me. I'm doing it." She looked at the ship and it rose into the air once again and everyone watched it land back on the shelf in the corner.

"How? That's like, the most awesome thing ever!"

So El told Dustin about her early childhood and how she could move objects with her mind. She kept it very humble. Mike shook his head.

"She's a freaking superhero Jedi. She's not giving herself enough credit."

"How long have you known?" Dustin asked Mike. Mike told him how El had saved him from the tree and how she had saved them both by *levitating* them to safety. El looked at the floor. Hearing Mike describe what she had done was making her feel emotions she wasn't used to feeling. He was *proud* of her. That was a new sensation for El. Especially since she thought what he was so proud of was something that made her weird and something that she had always kind of been ashamed of.

"But we can't tell a lot of people. It could be dangerous for her if the wrong people found out. I can't let that happen." Mike was saying.

El spoke up. "I want to tell Max and Lucas and Will. Now that Dustin

knows I should tell my other friends. Because friends don't lie."

"We'll tell them to come over here after school tomorrow. I don't think we should tell them Mike is dating Jean Grey at the lunch table." Dustin grinned. "This is so awesome. We'll be an *us* for once instead of a *them*." Dustin gave El a big bear hug.

After Dustin left to go back home, muttering *Jean Grey... that is awesome* as he went back up the stairs, El and Mike were left alone in the basement. El thought it had gone pretty well when Dustin found out, but she felt like Dustin might be the most accepting of her secret. She was more worried about what the others would think. Mike could tell by the look on her face that she wasn't totally relieved. They were still standing at the bottom of the stairs. Mike ran his fingers through her hair and she looked up at him.

"It's going to be okay. They will be just like Dustin was. They will still like you. I promise." Mike pulled her face close to his and their foreheads connected. He was looking at her with such love and admiration that she felt her worry start to melt away.

"I wish you could stay over." Mike murmured between deep kisses. One hand was holding the back of her head and the other was on her waist, pulling her closer.

"I do too but Hop won't let that happen. Especially on a school night. I wish I could. I want to so much." El replied, her breathing getting heavier as they got more carried away. They hadn't been able to be alone for many lengthy periods of time since school had started again so when they got a chance to make out it escalated quickly, but they so far hadn't had the time to do anything they *really* wanted to do.

"Soon." Mike said.

"Ugh. I hate that word." Mike chuckled and held her. She rested her head over his heart.

El was nervous all day at school the next day. Mike reassured her as much as he could but until she had told everyone all she could think of were negative outcomes. Every time she looked at Dustin though he gave her a huge grin and it made her feel a little better about

telling the others.

At Mike's that afternoon everyone was in the basement waiting on El to arrive. They were sitting around talking about nothing in particular when Lucas asked Mike if he had condoms for when he and El finally did it. Before Mike could answer Max was speaking.

"He doesn't need them." She said straightforwardly.

"What? What are you insinuating?" Mike asked, starting to feel annoyed.

"I'm not insinuating anything. Jeez. Don't you know? El takes birth control pills." Max answered.

No, I did not know that.

"Before you judge her, it's because of cramps and lady issues. It's not because she's out whoring herself around." Max rolled her eyes at how the boys always immediately thought the worst. "She's taken them for a while and they've helped her. Lots of women do that."

Mike was intrigued by this new bit of information. He didn't have time to mull it over for long though because soon El was gracefully making her way down his staircase. Everyone said hello and then took their seats. They didn't know why they were there as Mike had been very serious that he needed them all to be there but very vague as to why.

Mike started when El was seated next to him and took his hand in hers. "Okay, you're about to learn a secret. It's big and it could be dangerous if other people found out so I need to know that it will stay with just these people here. Just the Party. Do you all promise that you will keep this secret?" Mike solemnly asked.

Everyone nodded, questioning looks on their faces except for Dustin, who was smiling.

"All right, El. Whenever you're ready to tell them." Mike put his hand on her shoulder and squeezed gently.

El looked at each of her friends. "I want to show you all something."

She had thought she would just move something small but decided at the last minute that she needed to not hold anything back. "Dustin, Mike, be quiet please." The boys looked at each other with confused faces. El stood up and crossed the room so that she was opposite everyone else. El's outstretched arm pointed toward Mike and Dustin and they both lifted into the air, almost to the ceiling.

"Holy shit." Lucas whispered. They all looked from El to the boys in the air. Dustin and Mike were laughing, not believing they were basically flying.

After a couple of minutes El gently let Mike and Dustin float back down to their seats before she collapsed back onto Mike, feeling drained. He wiped her nose for her.

"What *was* that?" Max couldn't believe what she had just seen.

El was clearly tired so Mike explained the story to everyone. She listened to him make her sound like a minor deity as he told them about their time in the woods and what she had done there. She could only smile. He sounded so happy and so proud. She was sitting next to him with her head resting on his shoulder, having a hard time holding it up. He had put his arm around her as soon as she slumped back into the sofa and was holding her so she wouldn't fall forward. When he finished telling them about how he had found out he gently kissed her head, letting his lips linger for a moment.

"El, thanks for telling us. I know it probably was scary but you're our friend. We will all keep your secret." Will's voice was calming and reassuring. Everyone nodded in agreement.

"I guess don't ever piss her off, Wheeler." Max quipped. They all laughed, including Mike and El.

"I think you're a weirdo, El." Lucas said. Max slapped him on the arm. "Let me finish! But you're *our* weirdo. I think you're the coolest girl I know besides MadMax." He smiled.

El felt relieved. Just like Mike had promised, everyone still liked her and weren't at all put off by her talents. She was just tired now. Mike could see that she was on the verge of sleep.

"Is she okay?" Dustin was asking.

"It drains her energy when she uses her powers. She's tired. We're heavy." Mike said, gesturing to himself and Dustin. Dustin nodded.

"Hey guys, let's get out of here so El can rest. We can do something tomorrow. Maybe go to the arcade? It is Saturday tomorrow after all." Dustin suggested. They all agreed, seeing how tired El looked.

"Yeah, let's do that. Come on, Max, we can go hang out at my house if you want. Will and Dustin, you can come too." Lucas said. "Take care of our girl, Mike."

They all said goodbye and El heard them leave. She wanted to lie down. Mike shifted from beside her and helped her stretch out on the sofa. He left for a minute but came back with a pillow and a blanket. El's eyes were already closed so he lovingly lifted her head enough to slip the pillow underneath it and then covered her with the blanket. He carded his fingers through her hair, watching her breathe in and out steadily. He bent down and kissed her forehead and then went upstairs to make a phone call.

He was nervous but he would do anything for El so he dialed the police station, asking to speak to Chief Hopper.

"This is Hopper." He heard the chief's gruff voice on the line.

"Hey, sir, this is Mike. El's boyfriend? I mean *Jane*. I needed to talk to you about something."

"I'm listening but I don't have all day so let's hear it." Hopper said.

"She decided to tell our friends, Max, Lucas, Will, and Dustin about, um, how talented she is. Do you get me? I know they can keep a secret. Anyway, she showed them and now she feels drained and I was wondering if, since it's Friday, if she could stay here tonight. She's asleep in the basement right now. My parents are both home and will be home all night. Nothing will happen. She just needs to rest. Is it okay?" Mike gulped, fearing the wrath of the chief for asking a question where the obvious answer would be *no*.

There was silence on the other end of the line. Finally he spoke. "Kid,

you realize how that sounds, right? But I know how she gets so I'm going to allow it this time. How did your friends react?"

Mike was so surprised that he almost didn't hear the chief's question. "Oh, they thought it was really cool but they understand how important it is not to tell anyone. They understand the depth and the validity of the danger."

"That's good. Is she okay?"

"I think so. She's just tired. I will make sure she eats and gets rest. I'll call you if there are any problems." Mike was feeling more confident.

"Okay. I'm going to be here really late anyway. Take care of her and call me if she needs me."

"Thank you, sir. I will take care of her." Mike heard a *pshaw* as the chief hung up the phone.

Feeling victorious, Mike headed back down to the basement. He sat down on the floor next to the sofa. He took El's hand in one of his and with his other hand he rubbed her head. She stirred.

"I called your dad. He said you can stay here tonight."

"What? He did?" She sounded tired but hopeful.

"I told him you showed our friends what you can do and that now you're tired. He said he had to work late anyway so you could stay here. I have to make sure you eat something."

She smiled and laced her fingers into his. "Okay. I'd really like that."

Karen Wheeler was more than happy to let El stay the night when Mike told her that the chief would be working late and that El wasn't feeling well. By dinnertime El was feeling a little stronger so she ate with the family in the dining room. Mike had said that he would bring her food if she didn't feel like going upstairs but she was feeling better and wanted to enjoy a family meal with Mike.

As they ate their meal of roast chicken with potatoes and vegetables, El thanked Mike's mother for letting her stay and eat with them.

"I don't usually get food like this at home. Hop isn't the best cook. He's good at breakfast but not so much other stuff. This is delicious." El said. She felt Mike put his hand on her leg.

"I love to have you over, El. You are always welcome to eat with us." Karen smiled. "Mike, where do you think El would be the most comfortable sleeping tonight?"

Mike refrained from giving his honest answer. "It's up to her. She can have my bed and I can sleep in the basement or the other way around. I figure since it's Friday night we'll watch movies until it's kind of late, if El feels like it." His hand moved to her inner thigh. She concentrated on the plate in front of her, not wanting to make any weird noises at the dinner table.

"Well that's fine as long as you behave. Holly has her dance class early tomorrow so I'm not staying up late. I want to be able to trust you. Can I?" Karen asked, looking over the top of her wine glass as she took a sip.

"You can trust us." El assured her. Karen wasn't saying the right words or asking the right questions and El was not lying. She *could* trust them...to do certain things.

After dinner El offered to help wash the dishes but Karen waved her off, saying that El needed to rest since she hadn't been feeling well earlier. Mike went to his room to find some clothes for El to sleep in and returned with a Star Wars t-shirt and a pair of gray sweat pants. They would be a little big on her but El didn't mind. He had changed into his own pajamas while he was upstairs. Once they were back in the basement El changed in the bathroom and then joined Mike on the sofa.

"What movies do you want to watch tonight? Do you feel like it?" Mike asked.

"Sure. I'm feeling better really. Now that I've eaten I feel much stronger. Why don't you choose one and I'll choose one?"

Mike looked at his choices on the shelf. "Want to watch *A Nightmare on Elm Street*? I know it's scary but you can keep me safe." Mike

winked at El and she laughed.

"I'll watch that with you if we can watch *The Breakfast Club* afterwards. Can we?"

"Definitely." Mike inserted the movie and turned the lights off. He wrapped a blanket around the both of them as El snuggled into his side with her legs pulled up into her chest.

It didn't take long for El to be in Mike's lap. She was watching the movie intently and with every scare she moved closer to him. She was now sitting sideways in his lap with her back to the arm of the sofa. Mike's left arm was around her back so he could pull her against him at the scariest parts. His right hand rested on her thighs. Occasionally his hand would move slightly higher. She could feel his fingers wrapping around her inner thigh and his fingertips stopping on the back of her leg.

El jumped when the basement door opened.

"Mike," Karen called down, "I'm going to bed. Where are you sleeping?"

"El is taking my room and I'm sleeping down here. We're going to finish this movie and then watch *The Breakfast Club*."

"Okay, El, if you need anything just make yourself at home. I'm sure we'll be gone by the time you kids wake up in the morning. Sleep well. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Mrs. Wheeler." El called up.

Hearing the door close, Mike and El looked at each other. She was still on his lap but the movie was forgotten. His hand squeezed her thigh gently and she moved her face close to his. Her eyes darted from his darker ones to his lips and in seconds they had melted together. She felt his hand moving toward her center and moved so he could reach her more easily. She could feel how hard he had gotten just since they had started kissing and moved her hand down to touch him but he swatted it away.

"No, it's okay. This is just for you." I don't want you to worry about

me right now." Mike whispered. His breath was hot in her ear and she felt a shiver run down her spine. She was tingling all over. He was kissing her neck, sucking gently on her skin near her collarbone. His hand moved under her shirt and she felt his fingers graze her breasts, first one and then the other. "Can I take off your shirt?" He asked. El raised her arms and the shirt flew off. "Damn, that's so cool." Mike bent his head and took one of her breasts in his mouth, teasing her nipple while he gently gripped her flesh.

Her head lolled as she felt his tongue on her chest. He showed each breast the same level of care as he trailed his hand lower, dipping his fingers under the waistband of the sweatpants. He stopped once his hand had passed the elastic.

"Now *this* is hot." Mike said as he kissed her again on the mouth. "No panties? I think I like this." El felt his hand start moving again.

"I thought you might. I *hoped* you would. I needed to feel you." El had her head in the crook of Mike's neck as he started running his finger up and down her lower lips.

"Did you want me to touch you there?" Mike asked, knowing the answer but liking how it sounded to ask.

"Uh huh."

"Why don't we take off these pants? I can do much better if we do that." Mike grinned as El lifted up enough that he could tug the sweatpants over her hips. He then pulled them off from the ankles. She was sitting on his lap naked and he took a moment to look at her.

"Wow, do you know how pretty you are?" Mike asked, looking at his girlfriend's naked body. She shrugged. He wrapped her in his arms and pulled her to him, holding her. "I want to make you feel good." He whispered into her ear. He eased her back onto the sofa, moving her from his lap so that she was lying on the cushions.

El watched as Mike moved. He was on his knees facing her. He had moved her legs so that they were bent at the knees, opened slightly to him. She saw his floppy mane drop down and then felt his breath on her, her arousal causing it to feel cool on her skin.

"Mike..." El started.

"Shh, just relax." El felt his fingers first, gently spreading her open before he found what he was looking for, nimbly palpating until he heard her gasp. He rubbed in circles as he slipped one finger into her.

With his finger smoothly and slowly pumping into her, he moved his mouth closer. El almost slammed her knees together as she felt his tongue lightly tickling her lips, softly running up one side and then the other before he started teasing the small nub at the top of her channel. He had added another finger to his first one and El was feeling slightly stretched in a good way. El couldn't tell but he was spelling I LOVE YOU with his tongue on her button. She was moaning softly, not wanting to make too much noise, but it was becoming harder to control as his speed increased. She was moving herself to meet him now and was getting lost in the feeling.

"Mike, please don't stop. Oh, god, you're so good at that. Please keep doing it forever." She panted. Mike grinned from his position and continued what he was doing. He would pull back and tease her, barely touching her until she begged him again. He wouldn't make her wait long but it really turned him on to watch her eyes plead with him to keep licking her there. Then he would start again.

"Don't stop, it's happening, Mike. Mike...Mike!"

Mike moved his mouth closer to her, wanting to stimulate her until she pushed him away. He felt her tighten around his fingers and he kept his rhythm. Her hands were pulling his hair but he didn't mind. He sucked gently and felt her unravel.

"Oh, oh! Fuuuuuck!" El cried as she felt the wave crash over her. Mike continued until he felt her stop trembling and then he moved up over her and kissed her passionately. She didn't mind the taste.

"Was that good?" He asked once her breathing had calmed.

"You are really good at that. I loved that." El replied, her arms still tightly wrapped around him. "What about *you* though?"

"I just wanted to make you feel good. We don't have to do me." He

said as he rested on top of her.

"But what if I *want* to?"

"What do you want to do?" Mike asked, smirking at her.

"Take off your shirt."

She pushed him back onto the sofa and proceeded to do the same for him as he'd done for her. She took her time and made him moan, liking how his face looked when he watched her suck his cock. It didn't take her long to achieve her goal. She could feel him twitching more and he put his hand on her shoulder to push her back.

"El, oh god, El I'm gonna come. I'm going to tell you when to move. Oh, fuck that feels good."

She felt him twitch again and went all the way down, almost gagging but keeping herself in control. She heard him warn her but she didn't care and held him there. She felt the warmth in the back of her throat but since it was so far in her tongue didn't register any taste. Mike could not believe he had just ejaculated into his girlfriend's mouth and she had let him. El felt him spasm and licked him again before she slid her lips off of him. She crawled up onto him and laid her head on his chest.

"You didn't have to do that, you know. But that was fucking awesome." Mike stroked her hair and she traced designs on his chest lazily with her finger.

"I know. I wanted to."

Mike kissed her head. They stayed like that for a while until El got cold and wanted to put her clothes back on.

"Do you still want to watch *The Breakfast Club?*" Mike asked when they had redressed.

"I do."

They snuggled into the sofa once again, wrapped in each other's arms. About half way through the movie Mike mentioned, "um, Max

said something interesting yesterday. She said you take birth control pills. Is that true?"

"Yes. They help me with cramps."

"So...that's interesting to know." Mike said.

"Is it now?" El knew where he was going with his line of questioning but she wanted to make him say it.

"It is. Do you think you'd want to, um, go further some time?"

El thought for a moment. Of course she wanted to go further. She loved this boy and he made her feel like she was a goddess. "I definitely would want to. But I want to be alone, like *alone* so we wouldn't have to hold back and could take our time. You know?"

"I know. I feel that way too. I'd want to make you feel so good that you blow out all of the circuits in the house." Mike laughed, only half joking though.

"That's good to know." El kissed him and rested her head on his shoulder. "Do you think we could get away with me sleeping down here with you tonight? I want you to hold me while I sleep."

Mike kissed her back. "I think we can manage that."

They slept on the couch, Mike spooning El so they would both fit and he could keep her from falling by wrapping his arms around her. Just like Karen had said, the rest of the family was already gone by the time Mike and El woke up.

"I wish we could stay like this all day." Mike said as they awoke.

"We promised them we'd meet them there. We have to go." She kissed him and stood up. He pulled her back down.

"I had a great night with you."

"So did I." She leaned down and kissed him slowly. "I love you. I'm going to go get changed and go home to shower and change my clothes. Pick me up in an hour?"

Mike nodded. He would *do anything* for her.

A/N: So the Party knows now...and I know, I cringed in places too but these kids... What are you gonna do? They're young and in love. ;) Thanks so much for reading and for reviews and I'll try to have another chapter soon.

7. Chapter 7

This is the final chapter in this part of the story but there will be a third installment so it can be a trilogy. Some of what will happen is foreshadowed in this one. Thanks so much for reading and for reviews.

This does get kind of graphic so be warned that if this was listed in the TV Guide it would have the code SSC...strong sexual content. Viewer discretion is advised.

Valentine's Day was not ever a day that Mike had looked forward to much. He liked the candy when he was a kid but as he got older he never had anyone to call his *Valentine* so he often dreaded seeing the merchandise splattered all over the stores and the commercials on television targeting young lovers to throw their money away on what Mike considered to be a useless holiday created to capitalize on people's emotions. This year was different. This year he had El and he would buy all of the stupid teddy bears and heart-shaped knickknacks she wanted.

When El had the idea for the entire group to do something together for Valentine's Day no one objected. Initially she had wanted to go on a double date with Max and Lucas but she didn't want Dustin or Will to feel left out. Mike was doubtful at first as he had wanted to take El out somewhere as just the two of them but it made her happy to do things with her friends so he gave in to her wishes.

The only somewhat fancy place in Hawkins was an Italian restaurant called Sorella's so they agreed on that. They wanted to wear nice clothes and make a big deal out of it because it was something they had never done together. Since he knew that it would be a popular destination for couples Mike had called a couple of days earlier to make a reservation for six. The day fell on a Sunday the year of 1988 and while he was hoping people might stay home to watch football he didn't want to take a chance on not getting a table on his first Valentine's Day with El.

The Party arrived and were seated at a table near the back of the restaurant but with windows all around the building they had a nice

view of a terrace that was outside. Since the table was rectangular instead of round, Mike and El sat across from each other in the middle with Max sitting beside El and Lucas sitting across from Max. Dustin and Will were at the other end of the table. Usually Mike would want to sit next to El but tonight he wanted to be able to look across at her, he liked the way the reflection of the candlelight sparkled in her eyes, and with the table being somewhat narrow he could easily reach over and hold her hand if he wanted to. She was wearing a black dress with white polka dots on it that stopped just above her knees. It was tight on top and flared at the waist. Mike didn't want to look away.

Dustin leaned forward, motioning to the rest to also lean in so he could whisper something to them.

"Hey guys, don't be obvious but look over there at that couple by the artificial tree with the lights on it. She's wearing a red dress. I noticed her go to the bathroom a little while ago and then he got up a minute after she did and now her hair looks totally messed up compared to when she first left the table. I think they just got finished banging."

Mike and Lucas could see from where they were but Max, El, and Will had to turn around. El turned to look. The woman's hair was definitely disheveled. Max agreed that it looked like hands had been in it quite recently. They all laughed.

"That will be El a little later." Lucas joked, trying not to giggle too loudly.

"What? We haven't done anything like that." El bit back.

"Right. And besides, Mike and El will be all sweet and clean and missionary about the entire thing when they do it." Max chimed in.

El looked across the table at Mike, their eyes meeting with knowing glances.

If they only knew. Mike and El both thought to themselves. Mike loosened his tie a little. El smirked and took a drink of her water. She had slipped off her shoe and was rubbing her foot on Mike's sock, her toes resting on his shin.

Once the food arrived and they had all started eating, Mike mentioned that his parents were taking his little sister to Chicago on the upcoming Friday for her birthday. Her birthday was actually the following week but they had gotten tickets to see a touring performance of *Annie* and would drive over on Friday, seeing the show on Saturday and then coming home on Sunday.

"You love that musical!" Lucas said to Max excitedly.

"Quiet, Stalker, you'll ruin my churlish persona!" Max tried to glare at him but ended up laughing and smiling instead. "It's true though. I love the shit out of *Annie*."

"Yeah, you're definitely a *the sun will come out tomorrow* type if ever I've seen one." Mike kidded her, which made Dustin laugh as he was taking a drink. Soda shot out of his nose. Will was almost on the floor, bent over trying to laugh without making a huge scene. Being seated across from Dustin he'd had a front row view and found it to be hilarious and every time he tried to stop laughing he would think about it again and start all over with the giggles.

"Son of a bitch, that hurt!" Dustin said as he wiped his nose and inspected his plate to make sure he hadn't ruined his food. He hadn't.

"Do you remember that time chocolate milk came out of your nose when we made that blanket fort in Mike's basement?" Lucas asked. "That still makes me laugh when I think about it."

"I've never made a blanket fort." El said as she took a bite of her manicotti. "I've never even been inside one."

The boys couldn't believe it. They had easily built hundreds of blanket forts since their childhood. It made Mike sad that it was just one more thing that El hadn't gotten to do, all things he had taken for granted. He reached across and took her hand.

"We'll make one some time." He smiled and squeezed her hand before he went back to eating his ravioli.

"Do you have any plans to go hiking again soon, Mike?" Will asked. He was dipping bread into olive oil.

"When the weather gets a little better I do. I want to try mountain climbing, if El will come with me. She can have me on belay." Mike winked at El and she smiled.

"Yeah, you can have *Jane Grey* as your climbing partner. See what I did there? Jane Grey? Ha! I should start calling you that." Dustin grinned proudly, thinking his clever name for El was classy and cool. Then he got quiet, thinking about Jean Grey's powers in the comics and wondering what else El could actually do. He didn't want to ask in public so he filed his thoughts away for another time.

"We should all go white water rafting this summer!" Max suggested. "That would be so fun!" Everyone agreed that would be a great thing to do as a group when summer rolled around.

Their waiter asked if any of them would like dessert and Mike looked at El. "Do you want to share something?" He asked.

"Shouldn't we? It is Valentine's Day. Let's get the tiramisu. I've never had any." El decided.

While the waiter was off getting the desserts, Mike and El's tiramisu, Max and Lucas' cannoli, and gelato for both Will and Dustin, Dustin and El switched seats to make it easier for her to share with Mike. When the desserts arrived Mike let her have the first bite.

"No, Mike, you should feed it to her." Max said. "Here, I'll show you how." She cut into the cannoli that was sitting between her and Lucas and proceeded to feed him a bite. It went smoothly, Max's arm being long enough to reach his mouth when he leaned forward.

El blushed as Mike tentatively put the fork into the tiramisu and then turned toward her. She was sitting very close to him and her eyes never left his as he gently put the forkful of cream into her mouth. Her eyes bulged. "Oh, wow. That's good." She said after she had swallowed enough to not speak with her mouth full. "Okay, my turn." She wanted to feed Mike a bite as well. When she pushed the fork towards him she accidentally bumped the side of his mouth, right near his lower lip. She cringed but he smiled as he moved his head to receive the bite from the fork. After he swallowed he knew he had cream near his mouth and he grinned at her as he slyly pulled her

into a kiss, getting cream on her face as well, but succeeding in his plan to have her lips remove the substance from his face. Then he just had to help her out as well.

"Yep, just like I said. El will be like that lady from earlier soon." Lucas chuckled. Mike and El both blushed but didn't deny it this time. They smiled and finished their dessert.

Since Mike had his mom's car they had all ridden together and he dropped them back off at their houses after dinner. Will was first followed by Dustin. Then Mike and El waited in the car while Lucas quickly walked Max to her door, kissing her swiftly in case her step-brother happened to show up. At El's house Lucas waited in the car while Mike walked El to her front door.

"I had a great time tonight." El beamed at Mike when they got to her porch.

"I did too. I'm sorry we just went to dinner and it wasn't some romantic getaway type thing." Mike said.

"I thought it was very romantic. And I liked being with our friends. I had fun and I got to be with you. It was a perfect night." She was standing right in front of him with her arms around his waist.

"Well, almost perfect." Mike whispered as he leaned down to kiss her. It was long and slow and made her tingle all over. She felt breathless when he pulled away. "Lucas is going to get impatient. I'll see you at school tomorrow?"

"Definitely. I'll see you in the morning." She hugged him.

"Oh, I think I forgot to tell you but you look beautiful tonight. Just like, wow." Mike grinned at his girlfriend.

"Thanks." El replied, feeling warmth in her cheeks again. "I think you look great too."

Mike kissed her one more time.

"Happy Valentine's Day, El."

"Night, Mike. I love you." She smiled at his dopey grin and how he almost fell off the porch when he tried to walk backwards so he could continue looking at her.

The next school week went by the same as the others. El and Mike ate lunch with their friends and they went to their classes. They hadn't gotten to have any alone time but they would occasionally make out while doing their homework. El didn't do homework at Mike's on Fridays since she had the entire weekend to get it finished so she went home and was listening to music in her room and going through some photographs she had taken when Hopper appeared at her door.

"I need to talk to you, kid."

El didn't think she had done anything wrong recently and she wondered why his voice sounded so serious. She followed him into the living room. His suitcase was sitting on the floor beside the door.

"Listen, I hate that I have to do this but Powell's wife is having her gallbladder removed so I have to go in his place to a conference in Indianapolis. I hate that I have to leave you here but I wouldn't want you to have to spend all day in a hotel room being bored. I got some food so you have something to eat over the weekend. I should be back on Sunday night. I'm sorry that I have to go do this." Hopper scratched his head and sighed.

"It's okay, Hop. I'll be fine. I can take care of myself. I'll just watch movies. Maybe tomorrow I'll go over to Max's house."

"That sounds good. Just keep the door locked and call Callahan at the station if you have any problems. I have to get on the road. It's already going to be late when I get there." He hugged her and then left for the conference.

El stood in the doorway and watched him pull out of the driveway. It was getting gray outside and she could see storm clouds forming on the horizon. She went back inside and dialed Mike's phone number. He answered on the second ring.

"Mike? It looks like it's going to storm." El said, her voice already

shaky.

"I heard thunder a little while ago over here." Mike agreed. "Is Hopper there?"

"He just left to go to a police conference in Indianapolis and won't be back until Sunday."

"So you're just alone? I have my dad's car in case of an emergency. I'm coming over to get you. I'll be there in a few minutes. Go ahead and get some things and you can stay here while Hopper is gone." He sounded worried for her and not at all like a high school boy whose girlfriend was going to be at his house with his parents gone. He was only thinking at the time of making sure she felt safe during the coming storm.

Mike got to El's before the rain started but the wind was starting to really pick up. She locked the door and they went back to Mike's. He was trying his best to calm her down as she watched the trees sway from the heavy winds.

Once back at Mike's, the darkness of the hour made the howling wind and the rumbling thunder seem scarier than before. Mike wanted to take El's mind off of her fears.

"Do you want to build a blanket fort? You said you'd never done that. We have plenty of room down here." They were in the basement.

"Okay. How do we do it?"

"I'll go get all of the blankets I can find. You can go upstairs and get any pillows you see on the beds. Want to?"

She nodded and they both set off to get their supplies. When they returned Mike had comforters, quilts, blankets, and a couple of sheets. El had taken the pillows from all the bedrooms upstairs. Mike lined everything up on the floor so he could see what they had to work with.

"Oh, one more thing." He went over to the laundry area of the basement and found a bag of wooden clothes pins. "My grandma used to use these when she'd hang her clothes out to dry. They work pretty

well for keeping the blankets in place."

They decided to set up the fort so that they could pull back what would be the door and see the television. It was a grand affair, big enough for both of them to comfortably lie inside and watch a movie later if they wanted to. The floor was all pillows with blankets spread over them so it would be soft and they had enough blankets left over to use as cover for if they got cold. Their plan was to go into the kitchen and make something to eat and then go back downstairs and watch a movie. Mike turned the oven on to preheat and took a frozen pizza out of his mother's freezer. While the oven preheated he left the room, causing El to wonder where he'd gone. He returned a few minutes later with a lantern and a couple of flashlights.

"In case the power goes out." The thunder rolled. It had started raining.

No sooner than they had finished eating and made it back downstairs, the electricity did go out. The quiet of the house made the storm outside seem eerie and El hugged herself. Mike took her hand and pulled her into the fort. He turned on the lantern and there was light again.

"I think there are batteries down here for if these run out. I won't let us have to stay in the dark." He reassured her. She squeezed his hand.

El was quiet for a minute.

"Are you okay?" Mike asked, knowing how she felt about storms.

"Yes. Being in a tent in a storm, I was thinking about us. It makes me feel better." She smiled at him. "That was the first time you kissed me."

Mike remembered very vividly their first kiss. Now they were in a tent in the safety of his home and he felt the opposite of lost and afraid.

He kissed her again in the fort that they'd built. It seconds the small fire that was their kiss turned into a roaring blaze that couldn't be contained.

"Mike, will you take my clothes off? It's sexier when you do it." El sounded almost desperate and Mike obliged. He lifted her shirt and tossed it to the side. He kissed her nipples through the fabric of her bra before he removed her jeans, letting his fingers lightly brush over her as he pulled the denim down her legs.

"Will you help *me*?" Mike asked. El was wearing only her panties and bra now, both baby blue and lacy. The idea that she was wearing underwear like this without even knowing she was coming to his house that day turned him on immensely. El nodded and lifted his shirt over his head. She kissed his chest as he sat on his knees in front of her. Her hands found the button of his jeans and she slowly slid the his zipper down, feeling the bulge under his boxers. He moaned softly as he felt her hand graze his hard cock.

Both in their underwear, Mike pushed her back onto the floor of the fort. He appreciated her for a minute, taking in the way she looked, laid out before him waiting for him to touch her.

"God, you're so beautiful. Do you want me to finish undressing you? Because if you don't that's okay."

El sat up slightly and moved to her knees. Mike reached behind her to unclasp her bra. He sat back to watch as it slid off her shoulders and she pulled her arms from the straps. Once she was free of it his hands were on her chest, followed soon by his mouth.

"I like it when you do that." El breathed as her hands went to his hair. She felt Mike's hands move lower and soon they were on the sides of her hips, his thumbs hooking into the waistband of her panties before he started tugging them down. In no time she was totally naked in front of him. Mike couldn't resist reaching between her legs. Looking at her sitting on her knees in front of him was driving him wild.

"Is that okay?" He asked softly as his palm covered her center. He could feel already how wet she was.

She only nodded. Mike kept his hand there, not really moving it much. He was going to tease her because she was so sexy when she begged him. He kissed her while they were both on their knees facing each other. Her arms went around his neck. Her head was on his

shoulder right beside his ear.

"You still have clothes on, Mike." El pointed out. She moved her hands down his torso until they were at his waist. She pushed his boxers down. He had to move back to get them over his feet. El stared at him. It was the first time she had actually seen him naked where it wasn't so dark that she could only see shadows. She was impressed. Mike noticed her lick her lips but he didn't say anything. "Please move your hand some, Mike. I need *more*."

Mike gently pushed her back again and moved over her. He could see well enough now to watch himself play with her. He was mesmerized by moving his fingers over her and hearing the soft moans and gasps she was making. He could see how slick she was with arousal and touched her most sensitive spot with his finger.

She looked down at him. What she said next almost made him lose it right then.

"Mike, why don't you do that with your cock? Just lightly. I want to see what it feels like."

The dirty talk, coming from El, was a major turn on. He loved it when she did that and now she was asking him to rub the tip of his dick on her.

"Should I? What if it slips in?" He coyly said.

"What if I *want* it to?" She countered. Mike moved to his knees, resting between her legs.

He started slowly and barely touched her. He was sensitive and the feeling was overwhelming. With his hand he moved his throbbing member over her lips before he pushed slightly to get the entire head between the folds. She was so warm there.

"Like that? Is that what you wanted?" He asked as he rubbed her up and down.

"That feels so amazing! But I still want more. What does it feel like if you just put the tip in?" She was writhing slightly, her body seeking to be connected with his.

Mike lined himself up with her opening. "I don't want to hurt you. I'm going to just put a bit in." He pushed forward slightly, feeling the head of his cock being sucked in the smallest amount.

"Oh, fuck. I thought your *mouth* felt good, El."

"Go deeper, Mike. I want to see what it feels like for you to be all the way inside me."

Mike slowly pushed himself all the way in, watching El's face as he did. At first her brow was furrowed and then the look on her face changed to something more peaceful and then she looked at him seductively.

"That feels so different from your finger," she panted. Mike was holding himself inside her and hadn't started moving yet, wanting her to get used to the sensation. He felt her wrap her legs around him and pull him even deeper. "Oh, shit, I'm coming already," she whispered, "don't move. Please don't move."

Mike felt her twitch around him. He really wanted to start thrusting but he held himself in place while she finished.

"Please fuck me now, Mike. Let me feel you do that."

Mike pulled himself back and sunk into her again, causing them both to cry out. After a few thrusts he felt a strange sensation as she kept herself in place on him and moved them both so that she was sitting atop him. He was surprised at her sudden use of her power but he liked the new position. He reached down and rubbed her as she rode him. She could apply the pressure she needed and it wasn't long before she was crying out again.

"Mike, I'm gonna come again. Oh! Don't stop moving your thumb around. Fuck that feels good! I'm gonna come with your big cock inside me..." She pushed herself all the way down and Mike squeezed her breast with his free hand as she fell off the precipice and he gently pinched her nipple. She leaned down and kissed him once she had recovered enough but she kept riding him even after her second orgasm.

"Can I try something?" Mike asked. He was curious as to how many times he could make her climax before he did. And he wanted to try all the positions he could think of if she was willing. She seemed pretty willing.

"Anything." El said.

"Will you get on your knees?" Mike pushed her off of him and placed her where he wanted her. He got behind her and admired her perfect ass and how her head lowered onto the floor of the fort before he entered her from behind. She pushed back onto his cock as he slid further into her, her natural lubrication making it glide inside her. It felt amazing.

"Do you like that?" He asked as she met him, perfectly timed with his strokes.

"Fuck yes. You're so *d-deep*. I didn't think you could get any deeper but... Oh, I lo-love it when you're inside m-me." She was stuttering as she met the force of his thrusting. She widened her stance a bit and Mike almost lost it when he looked down and saw how sexy she looked. Her head was on the floor and her ass was in the air and he was ramming into her. He reached around and started rubbing her again with his fingers.

"Are you gonna come again for me, El? You sound so sexy when you do. I like to know I make you sound that way." Mike breathed as he pounded her from behind.

"I think I am. If you keep stu-stuffing your big cock into me like that. It feels so good, Mike. Please don't ever st-stop." She looked back over her shoulder at him, which spurred him to go harder inside while he was rubbing gently on the button at the top of her channel.

"You're so *tight*, El. You fit me like you were *made* for me." Mike leaned forward as far as he could and kissed her back. "I *love* you so much."

"Mike, I'm close again. I'm gonna come on your cock again. Oh, it feels so good when you make me come. Don't stop, don't pull out! I'm, I'm! Oh, shit! Miiiiike!" She pushed back and he leaned into her

as far as he could go, knowing now that she liked him to be deep.

Mike pulled himself out of her and sat on the floor of the fort. Her body was starting to become tired and he pulled her into his lap and held her for a minute, kissing her deeply and whispering in her ear how much he loved her. When her breathing had returned to almost normal he swivelled her on his lap so that her legs were on either side of him and he could slide into her again. He placed her arms around his neck and she held on to him as he gently bounced her on his still hard cock until she wanted him to go harder. She kissed him as he did this, her tongue massaging his and their lips moving together. He could tell she was tired but still very much in the moment. He sucked her bottom lip between his teeth and her eyes opened, looking at him with desire. He felt her push herself down on him.

"I want you to come inside me, Mike." She was saying between kisses. Mike's hands were under her ass and he was moving her up and down on his shaft.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, it's fine. I need to feel that too. I need to feel all of you. Please?" She sounded so sweet and was begging him. He thought that was hot.

He moved his mouth to her neck and gently nibbled on the skin there. She threw her head back to allow him a better angle and he got more frantic with his bouncing of her. He could feel his own climax building.

"El, it's going to be soon," he said calmly. "I'm gonna come in you. You're gonna make me come because you feel so good on my dick."

"I want to again too. Please give me a minute." She was looking him in the eyes. "I like feeling you fuck me. You're so good at fucking me. I like feeling you move inside me. Oh! Now! Fuck, this feels different. This feels much harder, I can tell. Keep fucking me, Mike! Uhn, uhn, shit! Mike, I'm coming again! Oh fuuuuuck..." Her voice trailed off as her entire body trembled.

Mike couldn't hold back anymore as his vision tunneled and he felt

himself unload into her body which was still pushed as far down on his member as she could get. She was still trembling on him when he had almost recovered.

"Are you okay, El?" He asked, holding her to him, feeling her body wrack with shaking.

Her head nodded. She didn't seem to be able to speak just then but she smiled at him and then laid her head back on his shoulder. He rubbed her back for more than ten minutes before she sighed heavily and could speak clearly again.

"Wow, that was the most intense thing *ever*." El said, lying back on the floor of the fort. The power was still out but the storm sounded like it had moved away from the immediate area.

"That was better than I ever imagined. I didn't know you could have so many orgasms." Mike said, lying next to her and pulling a blanket over them both.

"I didn't either. That last one was *intense*. Definitely want to try for that again."

They both had smiles on their faces. Eventually the power came back on and they could watch television but they opted to do other things, at least until they were so tired that they could only hold each other and fall asleep. Some time in the wee hours of the morning they decided to watch *Spaceballs* because if they wound up talking or doing anything else they could easily catch back up.

"I think it would be really fun to go rafting this summer like Max said. Do you?" El's voice drifted to Mike's ears.

"I think that would be awesome. I've always wanted to do that." Mike answered.

"Do you really want to start mountain climbing and take me with you?" El asked. She was snuggled against Mike's side with her arm around his waist and her leg flung over his hips.

"I'd like to. I think it would be a cool thing to do. I'd learn how to do everything but if you were there you could keep me safe. If you

wanted to, that is. I wouldn't *make* you go with me if you weren't into it."

"I'd go with you. I'd go anywhere with you." She moved her head so she could smile at him.

"At the end of the day though, *you* are my mountain, El. *You* are my pinnacle." He kissed her again. She was the culmination of everything he ever wanted and as long as they had each other they could accomplish anything together.

A/N: The summit! Huzzah! I hope that went okay. I call it "smuff" because there's a lot of sex, but a lot of *love*. ;) Stick with me and I hope to have part three started some time very soon. Over.